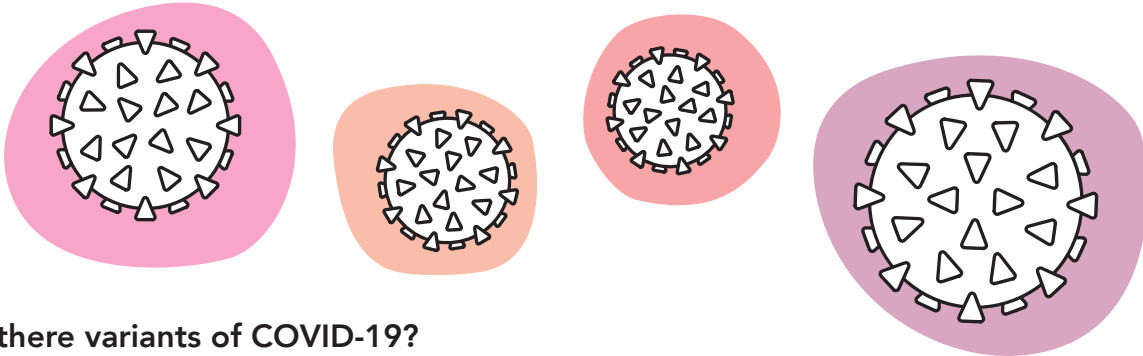


COVID FAQs: VARIANTS

A compilation of some of the most common questions about COVID-19 variants



Why are there variants of COVID-19?

Viruses mutate frequently. Most of the time, the mutations are harmless and have no effect on the virus at all. However, once in a while a mutation is able to amplify some characteristic. In our case, the new variants are able to spread more efficiently from person to person. As time goes on, this may become the dominant strain of the virus due to its improvement. This is evolution/natural selection/survival of the fittest happening in real time.

What are the characteristics of the variant?

The major change in the UK and South African variants is that they are more easily transmissible between people. The South African and Brazilian variants have also seemed to change the way our antibodies are able to bind to them but further research is needed to assess the differences.

Do the mRNA vaccines still work against the variant?

Early studies say yes! The vaccines are still effective against the variants however the immune response may not be as strong or prolonged.

Should we do anything differently to prevent the new infection?

Infection prevention methods remain the same. Social distance, wear effective masks, and wash your hands often

If I've had COVID-19 already, should I be worried about getting the new variant still?

The reinfection possibility is still being studied, however recent research has shown that antibodies produced during infection only last up to 5 months. Even if you've had COVID-19 you should still take precautions to prevent infection from both variants.