



CALHOUN COUNTY, MICHIGAN JOINT OPERATIONS CENTER



COVID-19 Unified Response

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, Feb. 8, 2021

Multiple Cases of COVID-19 B.1.1.7 Variant Identified in Calhoun County

The first cases of the B.1.1.7 COVID-19 variant were identified in Calhoun County today, Monday, Feb. 8. This variant was identified in two separate instances, one individual Calhoun County resident, as well as a separate three-

New virus variants that spread more easily could lead to a rapid rise in COVID-19 cases

NOW, more than ever, it is important to slow the spread

- Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 is known to acquire, on average, one new mutation every two weeks.
- Some variants may be more transmissible, or less responsive to vaccines - so it is important to avoid exposure.
- People traveling to Michigan and those who may have been exposed to the new variant should quarantine for 14 days (without the option to end quarantine early) and also get tested.
- Wear a mask**
A face shield may be worn over a mask for extra protection.
- Stay at least 6 feet apart**
- Avoid indoor gatherings**
- Get tested**
- Get vaccinated when available to you**

member family who tested positive with this variant. Currently, none of the four identified cases have required any medical attention. The Public Health Department is conducting contact tracing. All close contacts will be quarantined for 14 days and encouraged to get tested for COVID-19.

The variant was identified as part of a proactive submission of samples from healthcare partners to the State public health laboratory. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories has provided support for the SARS-CoV-2 response through performing whole genome sequencing. The ability to accurately examine outbreaks within facilities, community transmission dynamics, and the emergence of new variants requires a diversity of samples throughout the state. Without our submissions we would not have been able to identify this new virus strain.

All viruses change over time; such changes in the virus that causes COVID-19 is known as a variant. The B.1.1.7 variant spreads more easily and quickly than other variants. B.1.1.7. is believed to be more contagious, but there has been no indication

that it affects the clinical outcomes or disease severity compared to the SARS-CoV-2 virus that has been circulating across the United States for months. To date, the virus has been identified in at least 33 other states and jurisdictions in the U.S and four other counties in the State of Michigan—Kalamazoo County, Kent County, Washtenaw County, and Wayne County. These are the only known cases in Calhoun County at this time; however, it is possible that there are more that have not been identified.

“The identification of the B.1.1.7 variant in Calhoun County underscores the importance of our community wearing masks, social distancing, avoiding social gatherings, washing our hands, getting tested for COVID-19, and getting vaccinated,” said Dr. William Nettleton, Medical Director for Calhoun County Public Health Department.

Based on available evidence, current tests and vaccines for COVID-19 also work against this new variant. Protective actions that prevent the spread of COVID-19 will also prevent the spread of the new variant, B.1.1.7. People should:

- Get vaccinated for COVID-19 once eligible and vaccine supply is available.
- Wear a face mask around others.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others.
- Wash hands often.
- Ventilate indoor spaces.

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Calhoun County health officials also encourage people to get tested frequently to slow the spread of any variant of the virus. Testing is widely available throughout Calhoun County.

People who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, such as a dry cough, fever, body aches, a sudden loss of smell or taste, or fatigue should get tested by calling their primary care provider or visiting one of the testing sites in Calhoun County. Testing site and COVID-19 information can be found at calhouncountymi.gov.

For information, contact the Public Information Officers

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