

News Release

For Immediate Release: March 12, 2021

First cases of Brazilian COVID-19 variant detected in Arizona

Discovery provides another reason for Arizonans to follow mitigation steps

PHOENIX — The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), the Yuma County Public Health Services District, and Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen) reported today that the P1 COVID-19 variant strain, commonly referred to as the Brazilian variant, has been confirmed in three test samples from the state.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this variant of SARS-CoV-2, which spreads at a faster rate, was first detected in the U.S. at the end of January; however, studies suggest that the vaccines currently authorized for use are effective against it.

It is typical for viruses to change through mutation as they continue spreading, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants appear and linger. It isn't known how widely the variant may have spread in Arizona. ADHS is working with TGen and several laboratories and public health partners, including the CDC, to monitor this situation.

The discovery of this variant in the state is yet another reason for Arizonans to follow the mitigation strategies proven to reduce the spread of COVID-19, starting with:

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth around anyone who does not live with you.
- Maintain physical distance of at least 6 feet from those who aren't members of your household.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay at home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) and immediately throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- If you are at higher risk for severe illness, you should avoid attending congregated settings. People at higher risk for severe illness include adults 65 or older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions.
- Get vaccinated when you are eligible.

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination, please visit azdhs.gov/COVID19Vaccines.