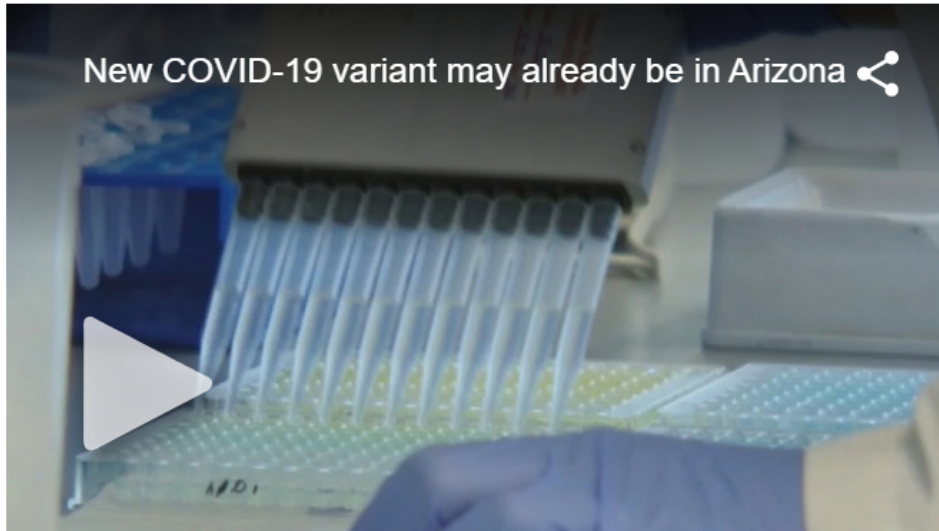


Could the new, more contagious COVID-19 variant already be in Arizona?

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New COVID-19 variant may already be in Arizona

With Colorado and California confirming that the new COVID-19 variant is in their states, experts say it's most likely already spreading in Arizona, too.

PHOENIX - With confirmed cases of a new coronavirus strain in both Colorado and California, could the strain be here in Arizona?

Experts agree it's likely more widespread throughout the country.

"We've known this has probably been around for a little while just because they've detected it recently. I think they've known since September it exists. There are some mutations to the coronavirus, that's not a new thing. These viruses mutate a lot more than people realize," said Dr. Ross Goldberg.

Dr. Ross Goldberg with the Arizona Medical Association and Valleywise Health says the biggest worry is how infectious the new strain is.

"The virus's job is to just spread, right? It wants to spread as easily as it can so it will adapt to its host and find ways to make itself spread faster and that's what it's doing here. It learned a way to make it spread faster between humans."

Coronavirus in Arizona: [Latest case numbers](#)

That doesn't necessarily mean deadlier, but different people handle COVID in different ways.

Banner Health's Chief Clinical Officer addressed the new strain on Dec. 30

"There is still much to learn about this new strain. UK scientists have warned that it appears to be much more contagious. They've also found through studies that it is more likely to effect children," said Dr. Marjorie Bessel.

Much more research is needed, but many are still confident this won't derail vaccine progress.

"So even changing a small piece of it doesn't change the overall point of the vaccine. I know they're studying it now but we're pretty confident the vaccines will keep you safe against these new variants," Dr. Goldberg said.

MAP: [Arizona Coronavirus cases by zip code](#)

The discovery of this known strain comes down to sequencing the virus.

The United States lags way behind other countries in mapping infections out, meaning the new strain could've been here for a while.

[Get the latest coronavirus news by downloading the FOX 10 News App. Our promise is that our alerts are there to inform you - not scare you.](#)

In order to protect yourself from a possible infection, the [CDC](#) recommends:

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- **Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.**
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.**
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.**
- **Monitor your health daily**

