

New 'California Variant' of COVID-19 found in Arizona samples



A new 'California variant' is concerning experts, but Dr. Goldberg says the way to beat it remains the same, variant or not.



By: Fay Fredricks

Posted at 5:36 AM, Feb 19, 2021 and last updated 7:52 AM, Feb 19, 2021

A troubling new development in the COVID-19 battle in Arizona: a new variant is now spreading and experts fear it may be more contagious than even the UK strain that has garnered headlines around the world.

The new mutation is being called the California Variant. Of the nearly 5,000 COVID samples TGen has sequenced in Arizona, this new variant was found in 4% of cases. By comparison, the highly contagious UK variant was discovered in less than one percent of the samples tested since December.

While this variant appears to be more contagious, Arizona Medical Association President Dr. Ross Goldberg says the way to beat it remains the same.

"If the virus is not able to spread, it can't replicate, it can't mutate, and we slow down these variants."

Dr. Goldberg says doctors and scientists know the variants are in the US.

"Really our job now is to stop the spread of the virus, variant or not

variant."

Scientists believe the existing COVID-19 vaccines should work against the new strains of the virus that are emerging here and elsewhere. It's unclear if either Pfizer or Moderna have directly tested their vaccines against the new California strain.

The mission of ABC15's Health Insider series is to dive deeper into the things impacting your health and the health of those around you. We're going in-depth with expert advice from people who know it, see it every day in their work and study it. Have a story idea? Contact the team at HealthInsider@abc15.com.