



Shawnee County Health Department

Shawnee County Health Department
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
03/30/2021

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MEDIA RELEASE

COVID-19 Variant B.1.1.7 Confirmed in Shawnee County

Topeka, Kan. – Three cases of the B.1.1.7 variant that causes COVID-19 have been identified in Shawnee County and confirmed via whole genome sequencing conducted through the laboratories at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). Shawnee County received confirmation of these three cases this morning. These are the first cases of this variant to be identified in Shawnee County and among more than 30 cases of this variant identified across Kansas.

Variant strains are mutations of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that cause COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) classifies variants in three categories: Variant of Interest, Variant of Concern and Variant of High Consequences. The CDC has classified B.1.1.7, also known as the U.K. Variant, as a [Variant of Concern](#) because of the increased likelihood of severe disease and increased level of transmission.

The Shawnee County Health Department (SCHD) urges residents to continue being vigilant about wearing their masks, watching their distance, and washing their hands among other preventative hygiene measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 in our community.

Additionally, it continues to be important to get tested for COVID-19 should an individual begin exhibiting symptoms related to COVID-19 or come in contact with a confirmed positive case. Testing continues to be available and free to Shawnee County residents. To find a location near you, visit: www.gogettested.com/kansas

“With the confirmation of the B.1.1.7 variant in Shawnee County and the recent uptick of COVID-19 cases in Shawnee County and across the nation, it is important that we as a community continue to do what we can to limit the spread of the virus,” said Dr. Erin Locke, Shawnee County Health Officer. “It’s important to not get complacent; we continue to promote proper mask wear and encourage all eligible Shawnee County residents to get vaccinated when they are able.”

Visit the SCHD Vaccine webpage (http://www.snco.us/hd/COVID19_Vaccination.asp) or KDHE’s Find My Vaccine tool (<https://www.kansasvaccine.gov/160/Find-My-Vaccine>) to learn more about COVID-19 vaccines and to access the CDC’s VaccineFinder to locate the closest vaccinating provider to you.

Questions about COVID-19 vaccines in Shawnee County can be directed to CovidVaccine@snco.us.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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Additional COVID-19 Resources:

Shawnee County Health Department: <https://www.snco.us/HD/coronavirus.asp>

Kansas Department of Health and Environment: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Attachment: FAQ - COVID-19 Variants

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Shawnee County Health Department is committed to working in partnership with our community to promote and protect the optimal health of all people by bridging gaps to eliminate health inequities, respecting the diversity of our community, through adaptive and innovative processes.

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Frequently Asked Questions and Guidance on COVID-19 Variants

1. What is a COVID-19 variant?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus, which are named for the crown-like spikes on their surfaces. Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Scientists monitor changes in the virus, including changes to the spikes on the surface of the virus. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic.

2. What variants have been found in Kansas?

At this time, only the B.1.1.7 variant has been documented in Kansas. It has been found in multiple counties, including Shawnee County. The B.1.1.7 variant has been found in all 50 U.S. states.

3. What is the B.1.1.7 variant?

This variant was first identified in the United Kingdom in September 2020. It was first detected in the United States at the end of December 2020. This variant spreads more easily and quickly than other variants. It may also be associated with an increased risk of death compared to other variant viruses, but more studies are needed to confirm this finding.

4. How can I protect myself and others from the B.1.1.7 variant?

The best protection are the mitigation measures already in use. Continue to wear your mask, social distance, wash your hands and follow isolation and quarantine recommendations. Get your COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you can.

5. Will my COVID-19 vaccine protect me from the B.1.1.7 variant?

Yes, at this time studies say the available COVID-19 vaccines protect against the B.1.1.7 variant.

6. Is my Quarantine timeframe changed due to exposure to the B.1.1.7 variant?

Kansas Department Health and Environment recommends that close contacts of cases infected with variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that are known to be more infectious observe the full 14-day quarantine. Fully vaccinated (14 days after last dose of vaccine regimen) individuals do not need to quarantine.

7. Does current testing pick up the COVID-19 variants?

Current diagnostic testing conducted in Shawnee County will pick up COVID-19 variants. Whole genomic sequencing is conducted to identify the specific variant. Testing continues to be available and free to Shawnee County residents. To find a location near you, visit: www.gogettested.com/kansas

Revised: 3/30/2021