



Yakima Health District

Media Release

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First Case of South African COVID-19 Variant in Yakima County

YAKIMA, WA- On March 12, 2021 the Yakima Health District (YHD) was informed by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) that two Yakima County residents had tested positive for the B.1.351 variant also known as the South African COVID-19 variant. After further investigation, it was determined that these infections were locally acquired.

Originally detected in South Africa, evidence of this variant was found in our state in February 2021. Preliminary evidence suggests that the vaccines currently used in the U.S. may be less effective against this variant. However, vaccines still provide protection against severe illness and death. Additional studies are underway.

The detection of COVID-19 variants in our state reminds us that this pandemic is not over. Now that these variants have been found, it is critical to double down on all the prevention measures to protect Washingtonians against COVID-19.

Because COVID-19 variants may spread more easily, it is vital that we all follow these guidelines:

- Wear a well-made, well-fitting face mask, even with people you see regularly and in your smallest social circles.
- Keep gatherings outside whenever possible.
- Avoid any social gatherings indoors, but if participating, wear a mask and ensure windows and doors are open to maximize ventilation.
- Wear a mask while in the car with other people, including with family who do not live in your household.
- Wash your hands often, don't touch your face, and carry hand sanitizer for use when water and soap are not available.
- Stay home if you are sick or if you have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Get tested for COVID-19 if you have symptoms or were exposed to someone who tested positive.
- Get COVID-19 vaccine when available to you.

"Remember, now that we know there are variants in our county, we have to be even more vigilant in protecting ourselves and others to control this pandemic." -Dr. Larry Jecha, Yakima Health District Interim Public Health Officer.

Additional Resources

[Yakima Health District COVID-19 Vaccine](#)

[Yakima County COVID-19 Testing Sites](#)

[Washington State Department of Health](#)