

## **Columbia College website update April 21<sup>st</sup> 2021.**

### **Variants of concern for Alberta.**

Variants are viruses that have changed or mutated while reproducing inside an infected person's cells. Variants can spread to others and may continue mutating as they move from person to person. It is normal for viruses to mutate over time.

Variants of concern can spread more easily. They can also cause more serious illness that could result in more hospitalizations and deaths as they become common in the community.

COVID-19 variants of concern were first identified in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Brazil. These strains have since been detected in Alberta and in countries around the world.

Alberta is monitoring for variants spreading in our province. Confirmed cases are updated daily.

### **Variants in Alberta**

To date, **3 variants** of concern have been identified in Alberta. The B.1.1.7 variant is spreading rapidly and has become the dominant strain in Alberta.

Anyone who has been infected with a variant strain will test positive for COVID-19. Positive tests are screened again for all variants to determine the exact strain, please see description of all identified strains below

#### **B.1.1.7 Variant (United Kingdom)**

First identified in the United Kingdom, this is now the most common variant of concern in Alberta.

Research to date has shown this variant spreads more easily and can cause more severe illness.

**Vaccines continue to be effective against this variant.**

### **B.1.351 Variant (South Africa)**

First identified in South Africa, research has shown this variant spreads more easily and may be capable of re-infecting people who have previously tested positive for COVID-19.

**Vaccines may be somewhat less effective against infections with this variant, but will provide some protection against severe outcomes.**

### **P.1 Variant (Brazil)**

First identified in Brazil, research has shown this variant spreads more easily and is capable of re-infecting people who have previously tested positive for COVID-19.

**It is unknown if vaccine effectiveness is changed against this variant.**

### **What we know**

Knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 variants is evolving rapidly. Scientists and public health officials around the world are studying variant strains and how the current vaccines may help protect against them.

Current evidence suggests the variants of concern have one or more of the following traits:

- are more contagious and spread more easily than the original strain
- cause more severe illness, which could result in more hospitalizations and deaths
- have the same symptoms as the original virus, including cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, and sore throat

## What should you do

Continue following existing public health measures to keep everyone safe:

- Stay 2 metres apart from others
- Wear a mask in public spaces, indoor workplaces and places of worship
- Practice good hygiene: wash your hands often and cover coughs and sneezes
- [Monitor your symptoms](#) every day
- If sick, stay home, get tested, and follow [mandatory isolation requirements](#) while waiting for results:
  - if positive, isolate for 10 days or until symptoms are gone, whichever is longer
  - if negative, stay home until you're better
  - quarantine for 14 days if you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, or if you travelled outside Canada
- Download and use the [ABTraceTogether contact tracing app](#) when out in public
- Get a vaccination. Everyone 40+ , Walk-ins available for Astra Zeneca.