



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

POST OFFICE BOX 962, 1080 Emeline Ave., SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061-0962
TELEPHONE: (831) 454-4000 FAX: (831) 454-4488 TDD: Call 711

Press Release

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Contact: Jason Hoppin

Communications Officer

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Phone: Jason.Hoppin@santacruzcounty.us

VARIANT IDENTIFIED IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

The Santa Cruz County Public Health Division is monitoring confirmed reports of COVID-19 cases involving variants of concern found in Santa Cruz County.

Two cases of the B.1.1.7 variant, known generally as the U.K. variant, have been identified in local patients. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is monitoring several mutations of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which can carry elevated risk of infection and mortality.

“We expected these variants to arrive in our County eventually,” Santa Cruz County Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel said. “Our case numbers look very good right now. However, we must not let down our guard, and need to continue wearing masks and practicing social distancing while in public. A virus cannot mutate if it cannot replicate.”

Viral mutations are normal. Fortunately, vaccines currently authorized for emergency use have been shown to maintain effectiveness against variants.

State laboratories are conducting random testing of positive tests for evidence of variants (a California variant, known as B.1.427/B.1.429, appears to be circulating broadly within the state). UCSC’s genomics laboratory is also conducting testing for local evidence of COVID-19 variants.

The first confirmed case was from a patient who tested positive for COVID-19 on Jan. 28, 2021. The second case tested positive on Feb. 28, 2021. Because of this, local residents should assume the B.1.1.7 variant is circulating in the community.

For more information on state monitoring of COVID-19 variants, go to <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/COVID-Variants.aspx>.

For CDC guidance on masks, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>.

