

**Public Health**  
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# Delta Variant FAQs

Updated 10/8/2021

## **What are variants?**

Viruses constantly change through mutations, which are expected to occur. New variants consist of one or more mutations in the virus. In COVID-19, various variants of this virus have already been identified. Some of these variants are more easily transmitted, and some can severely affect people's health. For example, if COVID-19 were a tree, the different variants would be the branches. Most of the time variants go away and don't make an impact. Other times they affect vaccine effectiveness, transmission, severity, and treatment- that's when they become "concerning."<sup>i</sup>

## **What variants are being tracked in California?**

Currently, the 4 most common variants in CA that are being tracked and monitored are Alpha (B.1.17), Beta (B.1351), Gamma (P1), and Delta (B.1.617.2).

## **What is a variant of concern and what is a variant of interest?**

Certain variants are being monitored because they have shown characteristics that puts them into the category of "variant of concern" such as, if they affect vaccine effectiveness, transmission rates, severity of illness, and if they are resistant to treatment. If they are a new variant, and their public health impact is unknown, they are a "variant of interest."<sup>ii</sup>

## **What variants of concern are circulating in Napa County?**

There are three variants of concern in Napa County. These are the Alpha, Gamma, and Delta variants. Both Alpha and Delta variants can spread more rapidly. A reflection of how easily the Delta variant can spread, is in the transmission rates that spiked in California from 2% in April to 82% in July.<sup>iii</sup>

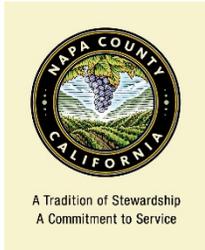
## **Will the vaccine protect me against the variants?**

Research suggests the vaccines are slightly less effective against the variants. Research from the UK indicates the Pfizer vaccine is 88% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 caused by the Delta variant. Early studies of the Moderna vaccine suggests that it is 72% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID by the Delta variant.<sup>iv</sup> Studies continue to take place to test the effectiveness of all three FDA approved vaccines against these variants. More will be shared as information becomes available.

Vaccination is still recommended as the vaccine can protect you from severe symptoms, complications and prevent transmission. For vaccination information please visit: [COVID-19 Vaccination | Napa County, CA \(countyofnapa.org\)](https://www.countyofnapa.org/COVID-19-Vaccination) or call 707-253-4540.

## **Will a booster shot protect me from COVID-19, including the delta variant?**

Most who have been vaccinated are protected from the variants. As of September 27, 2021, booster doses are recommended for some groups of people. Federal and State public health agencies recommend a Pfizer/BioNTech booster shot **for the following groups of people who received their second dose of the Pfizer vaccine at least six months ago** and are:



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- 65 years and older
- Age 18+ who live in [long-term care settings](#)
- Age 18+ who have [underlying medical conditions](#)
- Age 18+ who work in [high-risk settings](#)
- Age 18+ who live in [high-risk settings](#)

More information on the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shot, including the answers to frequently asked questions, is available from the [CDC](#) and [CDPH](#).

Pfizer was the first vaccine to be authorized, and therefore its data on its ongoing effectiveness was also available first. Additional authorizations to provide booster doses to a wider group of people (Moderna and Johnson and Johnson recipients) are expected to be considered by CDC later this year. We will update this page as those authorizations are made.

### **Will an additional (third) dose protect me from COVID-19, including the delta variant?**

Most who have been vaccinated are protected from the variants. As of August 12, 2021, additional doses are now recommended for moderately to severely immunocompromised individuals after an initial 2-dose primary mRNA vaccine series.

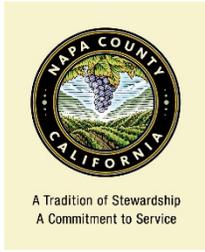
People who are immunocompromised in a manner similar to those who have undergone solid organ transplantation have a reduced ability to fight infections and other diseases, and they are especially vulnerable to infections, including COVID-19. The FDA evaluated information on the use of a third dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna Vaccines in these individuals and determined that the administration of third vaccine doses may increase protection in this population.

### **If a vaccinated person gets the COVID-19 Delta variant, can they spread the virus to someone else?**

Early data suggest that breakthrough Delta infections are transmissible in people that are fully vaccinated.<sup>v</sup> It is possible for fully vaccinated people to transmit the virus to others, although at this time experts are still gathering more information about transmission rates from fully vaccinated persons to others. Vaccines have still been proven to prevent severe illness and death, even though breakthrough cases can happen, the vaccine still offers adequate protection from COVID-19.<sup>vi</sup> The CDC suggests testing for vaccinated individuals who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, and recommends they isolate if they test positive for COVID-19.

### **What should our community do to stop the spread of variants?**

The best way to prevent COVID-19 variants is to get vaccinated and to wear a mask in public indoor spaces or crowded outdoor locations. If you have a weakened immune system or underlying medical problems, we strongly advise you wear masks and continue to practice social distancing. Get tested, regardless of vaccination status, if you have symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19. For testing locations in Napa County visit: [Testing Locations | Napa County, CA \(countyofnapa.org\)](#) or call: 707-253-4540.



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For more information, please visit: [www.countyofnapa.org/2739/Coronavirus-COVID-19](http://www.countyofnapa.org/2739/Coronavirus-COVID-19) or call: 707-253-4540.

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<sup>i</sup> Tracking Variants, California Department of Public Health, 07/22/2021, [Tracking Variants \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Tracking-Variants.aspx)

<sup>ii</sup> Tracking Variants, California Department of Public Health, 07/22/2021, [Tracking Variants \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Tracking-Variants.aspx)

<sup>iii</sup> Tracking Variants, California Department of Public Health, 07/22/2021, [Tracking Variants \(ca.gov\)](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Tracking-Variants.aspx)

<sup>iv</sup> COVID 19 Variants: What's the concern?, Mayo Clinic, 07/15/2021, [COVID-19 variants: What's the concern? - Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/chronic-disease/expert-answers/covid-19-variants/faq-20210715)

<sup>vi</sup> Science Brief: COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccination, CDC, Updated 07/27/2021, [Science Brief: COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccination \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s110721-covid-19-vaccines.html)