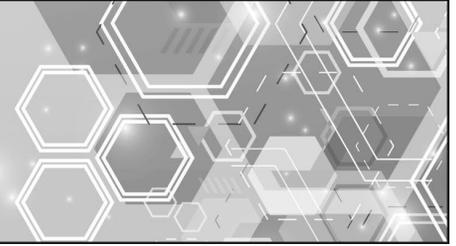




Durham Region Health Department
Facts about...



COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOC)

What are COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOC)?

A Variant of Concern (VOC) is a change or mutation in the COVID-19 genetics. These changes allow the virus to be transmitted more easily from person to person, increase the strength of the virus and may reduce effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine. Currently there are three VOC circulating around the world: the B.1.1.7 Variant (also known as the United Kingdom (U.K.) Variant), the 501Y.V2 Variant (also known as the South Africa Variant), and the P.1. Variant (also known as the Brazil Variant).

What do I need to know about VOC?

- Variants of concern are circulating in Durham Region.
- As VOC may be more easily passed from person to person Durham Region Health Department may ask you more questions if you are positive for COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19.
- Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will be notified by Durham Region Health Department if your specimen screens positive for a mutation that indicates you may be infected with a VOC or your specimen is confirmed as a VOC.
- It is important to follow all recommendations by Durham Region Health Department, especially if you work in health care, schools and childcare centres, large essential workplaces, congregate living settings (like long-term care homes), or if you are part of remote, isolated, or indigenous communities.

over...

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



COVID-19 Class Order

On April 7, 2020, the Medical Officer of Health for Durham Region issued a Class Order to address the risks presented by the potential spread of COVID-19 to residents of Durham Region. This order requires that anyone diagnosed with COVID-19, or who is awaiting test results for COVID-19, or who is a close contact of a person with COVID-19, must self-isolate. Individuals who are required to self-isolate and who do not do so can be charged and fined.

Are COVID-19 vaccines effective against the VOC?

There is currently no indication that the vaccines will be less effective against these VOC, although studies are ongoing.

[Vaccines](#) approved for use in Canada are the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Both these vaccines are mRNA vaccines. This means the vaccine tells the cells in our body to make a protein that is found specifically on the virus that causes COVID-19. These “spike proteins,” although harmless to us, will trigger our body to start making antibodies. Our new antibodies will protect us from being sick if we are exposed to the virus. The vaccine does not contain the virus and so it cannot give us COVID-19.

How can I protect myself?

Follow these steps to prevent exposure and transmission of COVID-19:

- wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home and [self-isolate](#) if you are sick
- practice [physical distancing](#)
- wear a [non-medical mask or face covering](#)
- household members of someone who is self-isolating as a high-risk contact should stay at home except for essential reasons

How can I get tested?

To arrange testing at one of the Durham Region COVID-19 Assessment clinics, complete the online assessment form at covidswab.lh.ca.

February 23, 2021

