

Update on SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Concern, Testing and Treatment for COVID-19

The NDDoH Laboratory Services Section continues to request that specimens in which SARS-CoV-2 was detected by NAAT be submitted for whole genome sequencing (WGS). This includes all hospitalized patients, vaccine breakthrough cases and any outpatient specimens. This testing is for epidemiologic information only so no reports will be reported back to providers or patients. The NDDoH recommends providers test patients for COVID-19 who are presenting with symptoms or who have been named as close contacts to COVID-19 cases.

Ongoing surveillance for SARS-CoV-2 variants (variants) has resulted in the detection of 1,078 variants of concern as of June 24. The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is providing this update on variant surveillance in North Dakota. The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently added the Delta variant (B.1.617.2) as a variant of concern. This variant is predicted to rapidly become the predominate variant in the United States. The CDC estimates that the Delta variant makes up about 32% of the viruses circulating in region VIII, which includes North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Utah. The following table summarized SARS-CoV-2 variant surveillance in North Dakota, as of June 24. Variants have been confirmed in all but five North Dakota counties.

Variants of Concern Confirmed in North Dakota

Variant Lineage	WHO Label	Number in ND	Percent
B.1.1.7	Alpha	941	87.3%
B.1.427/B.1.429	Epsilon	108	10.0%
P.1	Gamma	26	2.4%
B.1.351	Beta	2	<1%
B.1.617.2	Delta	1	<1%
Totals		1078	100%

Providers are encouraged to vaccinate their patients with any of the available vaccines. The mRNA vaccines, in fully vaccinated people, are showing high levels of efficacy against the Delta variant. Providers are also encouraged to discuss vaccinations with every patient encounter to provide education and assurance to patients about the vaccines' safety and effectiveness.

Additional information on variants may be found at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website [here](#). The CDC guidance for treatment is available [here](#). Providers who have questions, comments or suggestions may contact the NDDoH by calling 1-800-472-2180 or 701-328-2378. Laboratories performing WGS that identify a variant of concern should report the result to the NDDoH at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/reportcard.

Categories of Health Alert Network messages:

Health Alert Requires immediate action or attention; highest level of importance

Health Advisory May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation

Health Update Unlikely to require immediate action; provides updated information regarding an incident or situation

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