

Answering Your Questions about COVID-19

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Question 1: Is the variant stronger or weaker?

According to an expert on this specific disease, “some of these mutations may enable the coronavirus to spread faster from person to person, and more infections can result in more people getting very sick or dying. In addition, there is preliminary evidence from Britain that some variants could be associated with more severe disease.”

Source:

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/a-new-strain-of-coronavirus-what-you-should-know>

Question 2: Can I get infected with a variant if I already had COVID-19?

Yes, if you have had COVID-19, you can still be infected with one of its variants. You do not have immunity because each variant is different from each other and from COVID-19. In other words, even if you have been infected with one variant, such as the UK variant for example, once you recover, you could still be infected with other variants, such as the South African variant.

Question 3: How do you know if you have a variant?

There is no way for you to tell if your symptoms are from COVID-19 or any of its variants.

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at www.ontario.ca/coronavirus. Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit. The phone numbers for Telehealth Ontario and some local public health units are listed at the bottom of this document.

If you test positive, the Health Department will know if you have COVID-19 or if you have a variant of COVID-19 based on the test results. If you have a positive COVID-19 test, ask your healthcare professional to help you interpret your test results.

Question 4: Is there school in the fall?

Yesterday, Premier Doug Ford and Education Minister Stephen Lecce announced that Ontario schools will stay closed to in-person learning indefinitely after the April break.

The government said school boards will make provisions for continued in-person learning for students with special education needs who require additional support that cannot be accommodated through remote learning.

Private schools operating in-person this week have been ordered to transition to remote learning by April 15. Child care for non-school aged children will remain open during the school closure. Before and after school programs will be closed.

Source: <https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/ontario-schools-closing-to-in-person-learning-indefinitely-as-covid-19-cases-soar-1.5383711>

Question 5: When is lockdown over? What are the changes?

The lockdown is scheduled to end on Wednesday, May 5. However, as we have seen before, it is possible for the state of emergency to be extended beyond 28 days.

All residents of Ontario are ordered to stay at home unless it is for necessities, including: going to the grocery store or pharmacy, accessing healthcare services, exercising outdoors, or going to school or work if those activities can't be done remotely.

This page has more information about what is allowed during the stay-at-home order: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/enhancing-public-health-and-workplace-safety-measures-provincewide-shutdown>.

Be aware that the outdoor gathering limit of five people only applies to organized public events or social gatherings that are allowed by law, such as wedding receptions. According to the official document, “nothing in this order permits an individual to gather with other individuals if the gathering is not permitted by law.” So if a friend invites you over to their backyard, stay home, says the province.

If you live alone, you can gather with one other household, indoors or outdoors. Remember, stay two metres apart and wear masks around people outside your household.

Sources:

1. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/61029/ontario-enacts-provincial-emergency-and-stay-at-home-order>
2. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e09#BK0>
3. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/stay-at-home-order-can-can-t-do-faq-1.5980083>

If you think you may be experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, take the self-assessment at www.ontario.ca/coronavirus. Follow all directions from your medical provider or your local health unit at the following phone numbers:

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

Toronto Public Health: 416-338-7600

Peel Public Health: 905-799-7700

Durham Region Health Department: 905-668-7711

York Region Public Health: 1-877-464-9675