

Answering Your Questions about COVID-19

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Question 1: What do we know about the newest variant in Canada, the Indian variant?

The B.1.617 variant was originally detected and reported in India. There are only 39 confirmed cases in British Columbia (as of April 4), and Quebec confirmed its first case associated with this new variant on Wednesday. The infected person in Quebec has fully recovered and is vaccinated. In comparison, as of Thursday, Canada has had 78, 730 confirmed cases of variants of concern (including the UK, South African, and Brazilian variants).

Currently, the Indian variant is a “variant of interest” rather than a “variant of concern”. A variant of interest is one that is suspected to either be more contagious, cause more severe disease, or escape the protection offered by vaccines. A variant of interest can become a variant of concern if more evidence emerges that it does one or more of those things. Right now, health experts say there is no evidence that the approved vaccines won’t work against this new variant. Researchers are still working to determine whether B.1.617 is more deadly than other variants.

According to the COVID-19 Technical Lead of the World Health Organization, this new variant is distinct from others because it contains two distinct mutations. The fact that there are two mutations in one variant means that the disease is more transmissible and stronger against our antibodies. However, having two mutations on the spike protein doesn’t necessarily mean the variant is more dangerous than a variant that has a single mutation on that gene.

In response to growing concerns, yesterday, the Canadian government announced a 30-day ban on passenger flights from India and Pakistan.

Sources:

- 1.<https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/first-case-of-double-mutant-covid-19-variant-confirmed-in-quebec-1.5396800>
- 2.<https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/covid-19-double-mutant-virus-first-identified-in-india-is-now-in-b-c>
- 3.<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/covid-19-variant-of-interest-vs-variant-of-concern-what-does-it-mean-1.5398083>
4. World Health Organization briefing: <https://youtu.be/1OlkLNU9wcs?t=2236>
- 5.<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-canada-eyes-policy-on-travel-from-india-due-to-massive-surge-in-covid/>

6.<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/tracking-variants-of-the-novel-coronavirus-in-canada-1.5296141>

Question 2: Will pop-up COVID-19 vaccine clinics be accessible for people with disabilities?

It depends on the location of the pop-up vaccine clinic. Community partners are managing these mobile clinics.

Also, be aware that not all city immunization clinics are accessible. Check [this link](#) to see which city immunization clinics in Toronto are accessible as well as other information including the availability of parking and washrooms.

Click [this link](#) to see a map and search for clinic locations across Toronto.

Sources:

- 1.<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-how-to-get-vaccinated/?accordion=city-immunization-clinics>
 - 2.<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-how-to-get-vaccinated/>
 - 3.<http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19vaccinemap>
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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