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## New covid symptoms as XEC variant spreads across Europe

The new variant may be "more contagious" than other strains

NEWS By Kate Lally  
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A new variant is spreading across Europe (Image: Danny Lawson/PA Wire)

A new strain of covid, known as the XEC variant, is becoming increasingly prevalent as the seasons change. The strain is quickly spreading across Europe, with scientists warning it could be "more contagious" than previous variants.

Eric Topol, director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute in La Jolla said in a post on X, formerly Twitter: "At this juncture, the XEC variant appears to be the most likely one to get legs next." It comes after researchers last month predicted this variant could take up to a couple of months to "take off" and spread more rapidly, as reported by the Independent.

Article continues below

XEC, a sublineage of the omicron variant, was first reported in Berlin in June and is now spreading "quite rapidly" across Europe, North America and Asia, according to covid data analyst Mike Honey. It is a hybrid of previously discovered omicron subvariants KS.1.1 and KP.3.3.

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Covid cases appear to have remained stable in the UK as per the most recent data, with a rise of 4.3% in the week up to September 4. However, with the cooler weather meaning more people are likely to mix indoors, and with children having gone back to school, these numbers may be about to jump up, in-line with previous years.

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### Latest covid symptoms

The symptoms associated with the XEC strain are thought to be similar to those associated with previous covid variants. These include fever, sore throat, cough, loss of sense of smell, loss of appetite, and body aches. According to the NHS, the latest covid symptoms are:

- a high temperature or shivering (chills) – a high temperature means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- shortness of breath
- feeling tired or exhausted
- an aching body
- a headache
- a sore throat
- a blocked or runny nose
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea
- feeling sick or being sick

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