

[News](#)[Politics](#)[Opinion](#)[Culture](#)[Money](#)[Sport](#)[Life & More](#)[Puzzles](#)[Newsletters](#)[Subscribe](#)[Log In](#)[UK](#)[World](#)[Scotland](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Technology](#)[Science](#)[Environment](#)[Business](#)[Housing](#)

New Covid XEC variant to become dominant strain and will fuel winter wave

Experts predict XEC will be responsible for more than 50 per cent of new Covid cases in the UK by Thursday

Editor's Picks



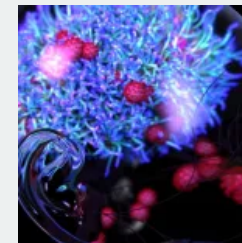
POLITICS

BIG READ How Gibraltar deadlock could damage Starmer's push for a softer Brexit deal



HEALTH

ANALYSIS How quitting alcohol benefits your body after a day, a month and a year



LONG COVID

Long Covid damage to brain's 'control centre' revealed by ultra-powerful MRI scans

Most Popular



The NHS will still offer autumn Covid boosters to the most vulnerable (Photo: Steve Parsons / AFP)



By Tom Bawden
Science & Environment Correspondent

October 6, 2024 2:48 pm (Updated October 7, 2024 3:33 pm)



The new **XEC variant** is spreading so fast it looks set to become the UK's dominant Covid strain this week, fuelling the current wave of the virus, experts predict.

XEC is thought to be significantly more contagious than the other variants and quickly grew to account for 21 per cent of UK infections on Saturday 28 September , according



OPINION

I posed nude when I was skint – and discovered something wonderful



OPINION

James Cleverly's rise has been nothing short of a miracle



FOOTBALL

DOING THE 92 Cheltenham Town are waiting on a miracle



OPINION

I'm an Iranian in the UK - here's what Britons don't understand about Hezbollah

[News](#)[Politics](#)[Opinion](#)[Culture](#)[Money](#)[Sport](#)[Life & More](#)[Puzzles](#)[Newsletters](#)[Subscribe](#)[Log In](#)[UK](#)[World](#)[Scotland](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Technology](#)[Science](#)[Environment](#)[Business](#)[Housing](#)

NEWSLETTER



The Essential

A curated daily round-up of news, culture, sport and more.
(Mon-Sun)

[Sign up](#)

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply. Your information will be used in line with our [Privacy Policy](#).

The growth of XEC will fuel the autumn wave, which has pushed cases up sharply in the past few weeks, with the cooler weather and children going back to school also playing a role.

The latest data from the [UK Health Security Agency](#) indicates that infections rose by 8 per cent in the week to 28 September

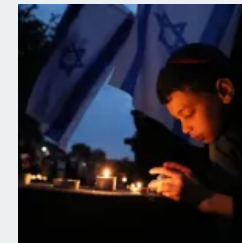
This is based on tests among hospital patients, which is a very rough measure but gives a indication of trends in the general population, scientists say.

Much of the increase occurred in the first half of that week with cases rising much less in the second half. This suggests that infections may be starting to level off, although it is far too early to say for sure, scientists said.



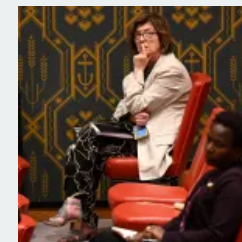
POLITICS

Winter fuel payment rebels hope for Rachel Reeves U-turn after Sue Gray's exit



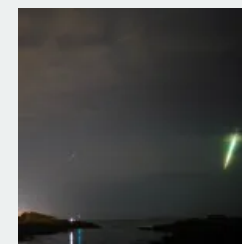
OPINION

The Israel-Lebanon conflict is about to hit Westminster hard



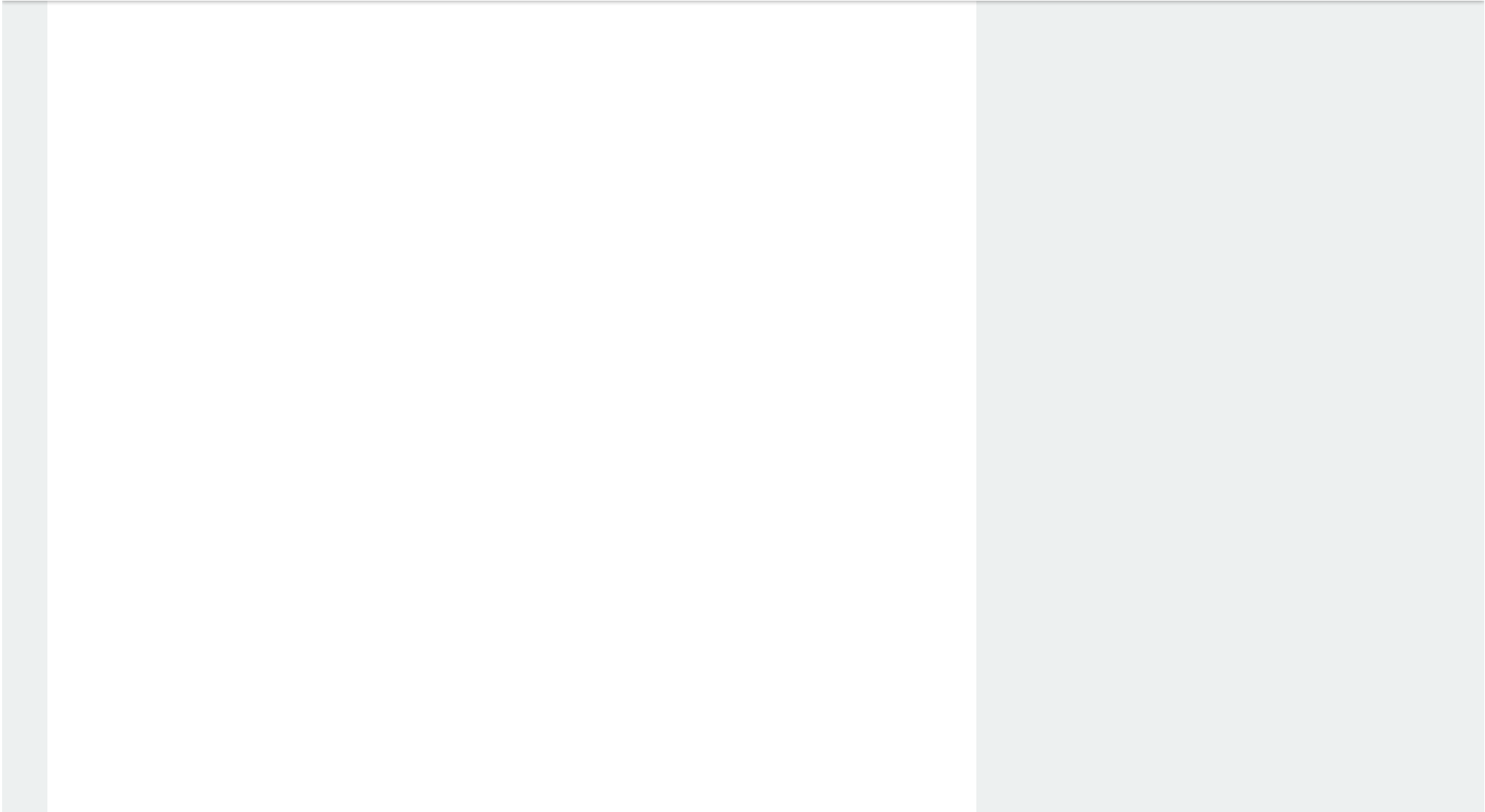
POLITICS

EXCLUSIVE Sue Gray's exit could reduce northern powers, mayors fear



NEWS

Draconid meteor shower 2024: Peak dates and how to see it from the UK





Note that while case rates are helpful in signalling the general trend of Covid within the population, they do not precisely represent the degree of change.

Chart: Bob Hawkins • Source: [UKHSA Covid Dashboard](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

[News](#)[Politics](#)[Opinion](#)[Culture](#)[Money](#)[Sport](#)[Life & More](#)[Puzzles](#)[Newsletters](#)[Subscribe](#)[Log In](#)[UK](#)[World](#)[Scotland](#)[Health](#)[Education](#)[Technology](#)[Science](#)[Environment](#)[Business](#)[Housing](#)

significant wave this year and only a couple of months after the last one.”

The latest UKHSA data shows infections at 5.05 people per 100,000 of the population on 28 September, compared to 4.66 a week earlier – an 8 per cent rise. This compares to 2.5 in late August and nearly 7 in late July, according to an analysis by [Bob Hawkins, a data scientist who works for Independent Sage](#).

These infection rates are far lower than the true case numbers in the general population since nearly all Covid testing that is reported these days is carried out in hospitals – and even that has fallen by about half since January.

Read Next



HEALTH

Covid hospitalisations soar as new XEC variant combines with waning immunity

The drop in hospital testing helps explain why the rate of infection at Christmas was 16.5 per 100,000 – compared to 6.9 on 20 July – even though scientists estimate that the case rates in the general population were quite similar during both periods.

Separately, new UKHSA data to be published on Thursday is likely to show that infections from the common cold remain high.

This is their highest level since December.

Under 15s are over three times as likely to have a cold as adults, the data showed – with children expected to infect their parents in the coming weeks.

Topics

Covid / Covid-19 / United Kingdom

Essentials

- News
- Sport
- Lifestyle
- Culture
- Opinion
- Puzzles

Useful links

- Contact Us
- About
- Advertise
- i Print Subscriptions
- iRewards
- i app
- i Student Digital Subscription
- Sitemap
- Newsletters

Follow us on

