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The COVID XEC Variant Is Spreading—This is the No. 1 Symptom to Look out For

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A doctor in the U.K., where XEC is rapidly taking hold, issued a new warning.



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By Dana Schulz
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The highly transmissible [XEC strain](#) of the COVID virus first emerged in June in Germany. It's since spread rapidly across Europe and made its way to at least half of U.S. states, with experts predicting it will be the dominant variant this winter. Data expert **Mike Honey**[forecasts that](#)

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within a week, XEC will overtake the DeFLuQE variants (KP.3.1.1 and its descendants) as the main variant in the U.K. And amid the surge in the country, one doctor has issued a new warning about the number-one XEC symptom to look out for.

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Helen Wall, GP, a doctor in England, recently spoke with the [Manchester Evening News](#) about the surge in XEC cases and said anyone who contracts this variant should be prepared to feel "wiped out."

"We could well be seeing the new Covid variant in practice," Wall shared with the outlet. "At the moment, it seems to be a bit more flu-like than previous iterations of COVID, with a high temperature, a cough, aching body, headache."



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"Some of the symptoms in the past were more cough and cold symptoms, but at the moment, COVID does seem to be wiping people out," she added.

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Here in the U.S., the DeFLuQE, also known as [FLiRT](#), variants still account for more than 60 percent of [all COVID cases](#), according to the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reporting as of

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September 28. XEC is the sixth most common variant, accounting for six percent of all cases. However, based on its trajectory throughout Europe, that could soon change.

"One reason for the concern is that XEC has moved quickly enough to outpace the growth of all other SARS-CoV-2 variants in a few areas in Europe," said **Scott Roberts**, MD, a Yale Medicine infectious diseases specialist, in an [interview with the school](#). "The rate of infections from XEC they're seeing in some countries rose pretty quickly compared to previous variants in those same places."

Roberts explained that XEC is so transmissible because it is a "recombinant strain" of two previous subvariants, the Omicron sublineages KP.3.3 and KS.1.1

"So, instead of this slow marching along—one mutation at a time—that we've been seeing with the SARS-CoV-2 variants, this has the potential to create a big jump, because it combines full segments of two genomes into one new genome," he expanded.

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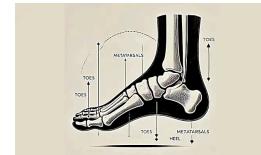
Doctors still say that getting vaccinated is the best way to protect oneself from XEC. Roberts pointed out that the

current Moderna and Pfizer vaccines were designed to target KP.2, another Omicron subvariant.

"From that standpoint, although this new variant might diminish the immunity the vaccines provide by a little bit, I'm optimistic that we're still going to have some degree of protection from both recent infections and updated vaccines," he said.

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