

THE OKLAHOMAN

Advertisement - scroll for more content

AD

HEALTHCARE

New COVID-19 variant making its way through US: What to know about XEC variant, symptoms

Josh Kelly and Anthony Robledo The Oklahoman

Published 5:05 a.m. CT Sept. 18, 2024 | Updated 5:05 a.m. CT Sept. 18, 2024

As flu season nears, so do new COVID-19 variants.

A newly discovered COVID strain known as XEC continues to spread rapidly across multiple countries, including the United States.

Scripps Research's Outbreak.info page, last updated on Sept. 5, reported 95 XEC cases across 12 U.S. states and 15 different countries. It has yet to be detected in Oklahoma according to the charts.

COVID in Oklahoma

COVID-19 numbers in Oklahoma reached their highest in a year during August, with a monthly average of 23.17%. However, rates have decreased since the week ending Aug. 24, with Sept. 7 reporting 18.6%.

During August, 41.1% of cases were amongst 18-49 year olds.

However, Australia-based data integration specialist Mike Honey wrote on X Saturday that the new strain, which emerged in Berlin last June, has been found in hundreds more patients across 27 countries in Europe, North America and Asia.

Omicron variant KP.3.1.1, also known as deFLuQE, made up over half (52.7%) of COVID-19 cases between Sept. 1 and Sept. 14. However XEC and a variant known as MV.1 seem poised to become the next dominant strains, scientists say.

"At this juncture, the XEC variant appears to be the most likely one to get legs next," Scripps Research Translational Institute Director Eric Topol wrote on X.

What is the XEC variant?

First appearing late June in Berlin, the XEC COVID-19 strain has spread across Europe, North America and Asia totaling around 550 samples, according to Honey.

The variant has been recorded in 27 countries including China, Ukraine, Norway and Poland.

What is variant MV. 1?

First documented in Maharashtra, India, in late June, COVID-19 variant MV.1 has been recorded in nine countries, including the United States, Honey reported.

It's spread across four continents in countries including Portugal, Scotland, Ireland and the Netherlands. In the United States, it's mainly been seen in the northeast, according to Honey.

How many XEC variant cases have been detected in US?

At least 95 sequences in the XEC lineage have been identified between June 28 and Aug. 20, including 25 in the United States, according to Scripps Research's Outbreak.info page last updated on Sept. 5.

COVID XEC symptoms

The CDC has not confirmed whether there are any unique symptoms from the XEC variant. USA TODAY has reached out to CDC officials for comment.

The agency continues to outline the basic COVID-19 symptoms, which can appear between two to 14 days after exposure to the virus and can range from mild to severe.

These are some of the symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose

- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The CDC said you should seek medical attention if you have the following symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Pale, gray or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds

How can we protect ourselves from XEC and other variants?

The CDC recommends that everyone ages 6 months and older, with some exceptions, receive an updated 2024-25 COVID-19 vaccine to protect against the virus, regardless of whether you have previously been vaccinated or infected

Contributing: Ahjané Forbes, USA TODAY