

The Columbus Dispatch

HEALTH

COVID-19 XEC variant is now circulating in the US. Here's what you should know about it.



Ahjané Forbes

USA TODAY

Published 4:12 p.m. ET Oct. 15, 2024

KP.3.1.1 is still the dominant COVID-19 variant in the United States as it accounts for nearly 60% of positive cases, but the XEC variant is not far behind, recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data shows.

"CDC is monitoring the XEC variant," Rosa Norman, a CDC spokesperson told USA TODAY. "XEC is the proposed name of a recombinant, or hybrid, of the closely related Omicron lineages KS.1.1 and KP.3.3."

The variant, which first appeared in Berlin in late June, has increasingly seen hundreds of cases in Germany, France, Denmark and Netherlands, according to a report by Australia-based data integration specialist Mike Honey.

The CDC's Nowcast data tracker, which displays COVID-19 estimates and projections for two-week periods, reflected that the KP.3.1.1 variant accounted for 57.2% of positive infections, followed by XEC at 10.7% in the two-week stretch starting on Sept. 29 and ending on Oct. 12.

KP.3.1.1 first became the leading variant between July 21 and Aug. 3.

The latest data shows a rise in each variant's percentage of total cases from Sept. 15-28, as KP.3.1.1 rose by 4.6%, and XEC rose by 5.4%. Previously, the KP.3.1.1 variant made up 52.6% of cases and XEC accounted for 5.3% from Sept. 15-28.

Here is what you need to know about the XEC variant and the latest CDC data.

COVID-19: Your free COVID-19 at-home tests from the government are set to expire soon. Here's why.

What are the most dominant variants that are circulating the United States?

The CDC's Nowcast data tracker shows that the following strains are in the top 10 of most dominant variant proportions:

Can't see the table? Click here to view it.

Health news: FDA approves the first at-home test for COVID-19 and the flu, no prescription needed

COVID-19 Current Wastewater Viral Activity Levels Map

Note: Typically, wastewater data are updated weekly and the data that is published shows the results for the prior week. However, the results can take up to five days to a week to be published online. Thus, the data from Oct. 5 is considered the most recent data.

Here is a map of the states and territories that have reported wastewater viral activity levels. The data was published on Oct. 10.

Can't see the map? Click here to view it.

Here is a breakdown of the data that is shown in the map of the states and territories that have reported wastewater viral activity levels:

Very High: Two states

High: 14 states

Moderate: 11 states

Low: 15 states

Minimal: seven states; one territory

No Data: one state; one territory

Changes in COVID-19 test positivity within a week

Data collected by the CDC shows a drop in positivity rate across the board, while the four states in Region 10 had the biggest decrease (-2.7%) in positive COVID-19 cases from Sept. 29, 2024, to Oct. 5, 2024.

The data was posted on Oct. 11.

Note: The CDC organizes positivity rate based on regions, as defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Here's the list of states and their regions' changes in COVID-19 positivity for the past week:

Region 1 (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont): **-2%**

Region 2 (New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands): **-1.9%**

Region 3 (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia): **-1.3%**

Region 4 (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee): **-0.6%**

Region 5 (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin): **-2%**

Region 6 (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas): **-0.8%**

Region 7 (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska): **-1.7%**

Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming): **-1.2%**

Region 9 (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau): **-1.3%**

Region 10 (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington): **-2.7%**

The CDC data shows COVID-19 test positivity rate was recorded at 7.7% from Sept. 29 to Oct. 5, an absolute change of -1.8% from the prior week.

COVID-19 symptoms

The variants currently dominating in the U.S. do not have their own specific symptoms, the CDC says..

"CDC is not aware of new or unusual symptoms associated with XEC or any other co-circulating lineage of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19," Norman said.

The government agency outlines the basic symptoms of COVID-19 on its website. These symptoms can appear between two and 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

Contributing: Anthony Robledo, USA TODAY.

Ahjané Forbes is a reporter on the National Trending Team at USA TODAY. Ahjané covers breaking news, car recalls, crime, health, lottery and public policy stories. Email her at ahforbes@gannett.com. Follow her on Instagram, Threads and X (Twitter) @forbesfineest.