



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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First P.1 Variant Case Identified in Bay County; Reported by Commercial Laboratory

LANSING, MICH. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) has been notified of a case of the P.1 or Brazil variant in a Bay County resident. The case was reported by commercial lab Quest, and MDHHS was notified March 31.

The Bay County Health Department has been notified and is investigating the individual's exposure history to attempt to identify the source of the infection. The county is also confirming appropriate isolation measures, recontacting identified contacts and requiring a full 14-day quarantine period for all close contacts.

"We are concerned about the discovery of another variant in Michigan," said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "It is now even more important that Michiganders continue to do what works to slow the spread of the virus by wearing their masks properly, socially distancing, avoiding crowds, washing their hands often and making a plan to get the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine once it is their turn. We all have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of COVID-19 and end this pandemic as quickly as possible."

"This is the second new variant of COVID-19 to be identified in Bay County since last week, and the rise of these new variants definitely impact the progress we have made this year with vaccinations," said Joel Strasz, public health officer of the Bay County Health Department. The Bay County Health Department has investigated three cases of the B.1.1.7 variant identified since the first case was identified in the county on March 261. No cases of the 1.351 (South African) variant have been identified in Bay County to date.

The P.1 variant was first identified in travelers from Brazil during routine airport screening in Tokyo, Japan in early January. This variant has been associated with increased transmissibility and there are concerns it might affect both vaccine-induced and natural immunity.

As of March 31, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported 172 confirmed P.1 cases from 22 states. As of March 31, Michigan has also identified 1,468 cases of B.1.1.7 variant infections in 51 Michigan jurisdictions and seven cases of B.1.135 variant infections in six Michigan jurisdictions.

Based on available evidence, current tests can identify COVID-19 in these cases. The available COVID-19 vaccines also work against this new variant. Protective actions that prevent the spread of COVID-19 will also prevent the spread of all of the variants that have been identified in Michigan. Michiganders should:

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- Get vaccinated for COVID-19.
- Wear a mask around others.
- Stay six feet apart from others.
- Wash hands often.
- Ventilate indoor spaces.

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time.

Whole genome sequencing allows scientists to examine the genetic material of pathogens, including SARS-CoV-2. Over the past 10 months, laboratories across Michigan have been submitting samples to the state public health laboratory for surveillance to help monitor the emergence of any variants of concern. MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories prioritizes additional specimens for whole genome sequencing when there is increased concern for a new variant of the virus, such as in people with a travel history to places where the variant is known to be circulating.

Michigan residents seeking more information about the COVID-19 vaccine can visit [Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine](https://www.michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine). Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at [Michigan.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus) and [CDC.gov/Coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/Coronavirus).

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