

For Immediate Release

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COVID-19 Variant in Washtenaw County

Washtenaw County Health Department provides an update on the B117 variant

YPSILANTI, Mich., Feb 5, 2021 – To date, 23 cases of the COVID-19 variant B117 have been identified in Washtenaw County. The initial case of the B117 variant was identified on Jan 16 in the University of Michigan community. Not all subsequent cases are connected to this first case, but all remain associated with the university community. Washtenaw County Health Department, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), and the university are working closely to implement additional containment strategies to slow the spread of the variant.

As a part of this response, the Health Department and local partners have offered no-cost testing each weekend since the variant was identified locally. Positive COVID-19 tests from these events are being sequenced for the variant. From the Jan 24 event, no cases of the variant were identified among the positive test results. Sequencing from additional dates is still pending.

“We remain concerned about the identification of the B117 variant locally,” says Juan Luis Marquez, MD, MPH, medical director with Washtenaw County Health Department. “We are working to contain the known cluster of cases, and we ask everyone to step up their use of effective prevention strategies and seek testing if needed.”

COVID-19 Testing

The next no-cost, drive-thru testing event is Sat., Feb 6 from 12:00-4:00 pm Pioneer High School 601 W. Stadium Blvd, Ann Arbor, MI. [Pre-registration](#) is available but not required. Positive results from this testing will be sequenced for the B117 variant. COVID-19 test results take about 72 hours. The additional sequencing will take a week or more after that time.

Ongoing testing options are listed at www.washtenaw.org/covid19test or by using the [statewide COVID-19 test locator](#).

We are still learning about the B117 variant, we know it is more contagious than COVID-19. This means the variant can spread faster, which can increase the number of people who may get seriously ill or die. Current vaccines are believed to be effective against the B117 variant.

Everyone should continue to limit possible exposures to COVID-19. Our existing science-based prevention strategies are even more important now and prevent new cases and additional hospitalizations or deaths. These strategies will help slow the spread of both COVID-19 and the B117 variant:

- Wear a face mask around others. Cloth masks with multiple layers of fabric are still recommended.

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- Keep at least 6 feet apart from others
- Clean hands frequently
- Avoid crowded areas or gatherings
- Ventilate indoor spaces if around others
- Seek [testing](#) if ill, exposed, or after travel
- Follow [isolation or quarantine](#) guidance if ill, exposed, or waiting on test results
- Get vaccinated when vaccine becomes available to you

Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [New COVID-19 Variants](#)

CDC: [Your Guide to Masks](#)

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) [News Releases](#)

Washtenaw County Health Department www.washtenaw.org/covid19

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community, including responding to health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs. Visit us at washtenaw.org/health or call 734-544-6700.

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