

COVID-19 FAQs

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These FAQs represent the most current information about COVID-19 available at the time of publication. Recommendations may change as new studies are conducted on COVID-19 and emerging variants such as the Delta variant. For the latest studies and recommendations on COVID-19, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

Q: What is the Delta variant?

A: Like any virus, the COVID-19 virus is able to mutate and change over time. The Delta variant is a new strain of the COVID-19 virus that was first identified in India in December 2020 and has since spread to other parts of the world.

Q: How is the Delta variant different from other strains of the COVID-19 virus?

A: The Delta variant is known to be much more contagious than other strains that have previously been identified.

Because it is a variant of the same virus, the symptoms are similar, and the illness it causes is treated in the same way. More studies are needed to determine whether Delta variant symptoms are different from or more severe than symptoms of earlier strains.

Q: Does a COVID-19 test identify the strain of a virus? How do we know whether the Delta variant is present in Victoria?

A: Virus strains are identified through genome sequencing. This is separate from the test used to confirm a diagnosis of COVID-19.

Genome sequencing is not performed on every COVID-19 virus sample, but state health authorities order a fraction of samples to be analyzed so that they can track which strains are most common. From this additional testing, it has been determined that the Delta variant accounts for about 80% of COVID-19 cases in Texas.

Q: Are current COVID-19 vaccines effective against the Delta variant?

A: Yes. Statistics show that available COVID-19 vaccines provide a high level of protection against the virus, including more contagious variants such as the Delta variant. The Delta variant appears to be causing a higher number of breakthrough infections (in which a vaccinated person becomes infected), but vaccinated individuals are still highly protected compared to those who are not.

Q: Why did the CDC change its recommendation about wearing masks?

A: Recent studies have indicated that vaccinated people who become infected with the Delta variant can spread the virus to others. As a result, the CDC on July 27 recommended that everyone—regardless of vaccination status—wear a facial covering in public indoor spaces in communities that are experiencing high transmission.

Q: Is Victoria County currently experiencing high transmission?

A: Yes. A community is considered to have high transmission if more than 100 new cases are identified per 100,000 residents during a seven-day period. Victoria surpassed this metric in late July and remains in a state of high transmission.

Case count updates for Victoria County are provided daily at <https://www.vcphd.org/page/health.covid19>.

Q: Am I required to wear a facial covering in Victoria County?

A: State regulations prohibit local governments from imposing facial covering requirements. As such, there is no city-wide or county-wide mask mandate in place. However, businesses and other organizations are free to require facial coverings at their own discretion.

Q: How do we know that the vaccines work? If vaccinated people can still contract and spread COVID-19, why should I bother getting vaccinated?

A: More than 85% of COVID-19 cases in Victoria County are in individuals who are not vaccinated. This trends also holds true throughout the nation, with unvaccinated individuals accounting for the vast majority of infections and hospitalizations.

While none of the COVID-19 vaccines is 100% effective, studies show that being vaccinated greatly reduces your risk of infection and serious illness.

Q: Are the vaccines safe?

A: Yes. Each of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines has been thoroughly tested and has been administered to millions of people. Health officials are closely monitoring vaccine recipients for any adverse side effects.

A very small number of vaccine recipients have developed serious side effects, such as blood clots or myocarditis. However, the vast majority experience no side effects or mild side effects. For this reason, the benefits of the vaccine are considered to outweigh the risk.

You can read more about COVID-19 vaccine testing and side effects in this report from Johns Hopkins Medicine: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/is-the-covid19-vaccine-safe>

According to the CDC, “Vaccine monitoring has historically shown that side effects generally happen within six weeks of receiving a vaccine dose. For this reason, the FDA required each of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines to be studied for at least two months (eight weeks) after the final dose. Millions of people have received COVID-19 vaccines, and no long-term side effects have been detected.”