



# COVID-19, virus variants, and how to stay safe

Feel confused about COVID-19, variants, and vaccines? Here are answers to common questions about variants and how you can stay safe.



## What is a virus?

A virus is a tiny germ, way smaller than anything you can see. Viruses can make us sick, but they can't do anything on their own — they need to live inside the cells in our bodies to stay alive. To do that, they must get into the cells in our body.



## How does the coronavirus get into my body?

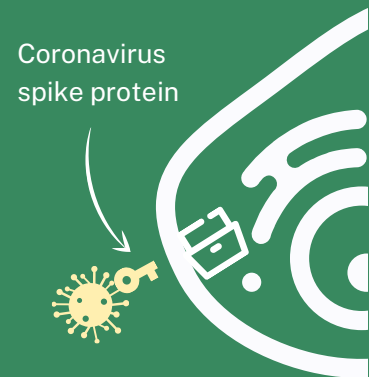
The coronavirus enters your body through tiny droplets that contain the virus, which are spread from an infected person breathing, coughing, or sneezing. You may breathe in the droplets or touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when they have droplets on them.



Once inside your body, the coronavirus enters your cells, which are tiny building blocks too small to see with your eyes.



The virus uses a special "key" called a spike protein to open your cells' "doors".



## How does the virus make me sick?

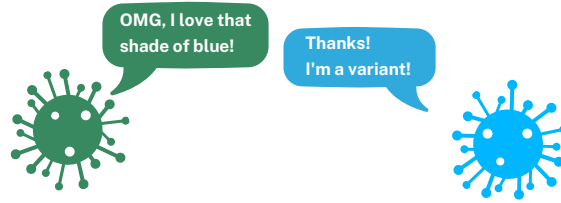
Once inside your cells, the virus makes lots of copies of itself. These copies break out of cells, then infect other cells. Then, there are so many virus copies that your normal cells can't work the right way ... and you get sick.





## What are these new variants everyone is talking about?

Variants are common and expected. A variant is a different version of the original virus. Here's how it works: as a virus copies itself inside your cells, it can change, called a **mutation**. The more a virus makes copies of itself, the more variants appear.



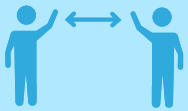
You can help stop the spread of COVID-19 and new variants in your community by **not catching the virus!**



**Get vaccinated and boosted**



**Wear a mask** when indoors in public



**Social distance** - stay 6 feet apart (about the width of a car)



**Wash your hands** - sing Happy Birthday twice while scrubbing!



If fewer people have the virus, it can't get into our cells and copy itself. Which means it can't mutate and create variants.



## Will we have to keep getting boosters?

Yes, most likely. We don't know how often yet, because it depends on how many people get vaccinated and how quickly the coronavirus can make new variants.

All viruses are always changing, so we all should stay up-to-date on our vaccines and boosters.

**To learn more, visit:**

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)