

# SARS-COV-2 VARIANTS

The SARS-CoV-2 Interagency Group (SIG) established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services coordinates efforts across CDC, NIH, FDA, Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, and the U.S. Department of Defense to rapidly characterize emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants and monitor their potential impact on critical COVID-19 mitigation measures, including vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics (63). WHO also classifies variants (64). To ease public discussions of variants, WHO proposed labeling variants based upon the Greek alphabet. U.S. classifications may differ from those of WHO because the impact of variants may differ by location.

SIG meets regularly to evaluate the risks posed by SARS-CoV-2 variants circulating in the United States and to make recommendations about the classification of variants under four categories in order of increasing clinical significance\*. The following list includes variants that have been characterized as of January 1, 2022:



## Variants Being Monitored

Variants for which there are data indicating a potential or clear impact on clinical interventions or that have been associated with more severe disease or increased transmission but are no longer detected or are circulating at very low levels in the United States, and do not pose a significant and imminent risk to U.S. public health. A **Variant of Interest** or a **Variant of Concern** may be downgraded to this category when there is a significant and sustained reduction in its prevalence, or if evidence indicates that a variant does not pose significant risk to U.S. public health.

- Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Epsilon, Eta, Iota, Kappa, Mu, Zeta

## Variants of Interest

Variants with characteristics that have been associated with changes to receptor binding, reduced immunity from previous infection or vaccination, decreased efficacy of treatments, potential diagnostic impact, or predicted increase in transmissibility or disease severity.

- As of January 1, 2022, there are no SARS-CoV-2 Variants of Interest in the U.S.

## Variants of Concern

Variants for which there is evidence of an increase in transmissibility, more severe disease, significant reduction in immunity from previous infection or vaccination, reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.

- Delta and Omicron

## Variants of High Consequence

Variants having clear evidence that prevention measures or medical countermeasures have significantly reduced effectiveness relative to previously circulating variants.

- As of January 1, 2022, there are no SARS-CoV-2 variants in the U.S. that rise to the level of high consequence.

\*Given the continuous evolution of SARS-CoV-2 and our understanding of the impact of emerging variants on public health, variants may be reclassified based on their prevalence and health impact.