



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**New Variant Strain B.1.1.7 (UK variant) found in Northern Kentucky**

**FLORENCE, KY.** — The Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH) has notified the Northern Kentucky Health Department (NKY Health) that COVID-19 positive test samples from two Kenton County residents in January contain the B.1.1.7 strain. This strain is also known as the United Kingdom (UK) variant. The UK variant is a mutation of the SARS CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19. These are the first cases of this strain detected in Kentucky and in Northern Kentucky.

Prior to receiving notification from the KDPH about the cases with the new virus strain, NKY Health had already completed the disease investigations and contact tracing on the positive cases. As with all cases, the individuals who are positive were interviewed to gather information on symptoms, close contacts and exposure. These individuals who were positive for COVID-19 were required to isolate/quarantine and those considered in close contact to the cases were notified to quarantine, monitor for symptoms and get tested if feeling ill.

The UK variant of SARS-CoV-2 was first detected in the United Kingdom and has since been detected in 293 cases in 24 states in the U. S. The CDC as well as the KDPH and local health departments have been monitoring the emergence of this strain, including proactively testing positive COVID-19 specimens for variant strains of the virus. There may be more cases as the state continues to test samples throughout the state.

“This particular strain of virus is more contagious - it’s easier to catch than other strains we have seen thus far in Northern Kentucky,” stated Dr. Lynne Saddler, District Director of Health for the Northern Kentucky Health Department, “Now more than ever, we all must absolutely be vigilant in using the preventive measures that we know are effective - wearing face masks, social distancing, avoiding gatherings, handwashing and not going to work, school or events if you are feeling ill. These actions will help protect you and those around you. Getting vaccinated when you are eligible will provide an additional level of protection.” Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccine are effective against this variant.

NKY Health will continue to work with the Kentucky Department for Public Health to identify additional cases with this new strain of COVID-19, conduct disease investigations and contact tracing for positive cases and vaccinate individuals who are currently eligible as vaccine is available. For more information on what to do if you are positive or a close contact to a positive case, where to get tested, who qualifies for vaccination at this time and ways to avoid the virus, please visit [NKYHealth.org](http://NKYHealth.org), like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter.

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