

BREAKING NEWS CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK
VARIANT EDITION (accessible version)

By [On the Media](#)

1. *A variant is not a new virus but a variation on a familiar theme. It's not a pigeon turned into a tiger; it's a pigeon with a mustache.*
2. Mutations are biological typos. They can be harmful, helpful, or insignificant. *More mutations doesn't inherently mean a more lethal virus.*
3. *Don't conflate detection with emergence.* Where a variant is detected is not necessarily where it emerged. By the time it's found it's likely already spread.
4. Concern is good. But avoid people or outlets fanning fear in headlines, tweets or chat. *That's unhealthy.*
5. There are 3 relevant measures for gauging a variant: how fast it spreads, the severity of the disease it can cause, and how well it evades our immune system (bolstered by past infection, vaccine, or treatment.)
6. It is extraordinarily hard for a virus to circumvent the entire arsenal of immune responses our bodies marshal after vaccination. Pathogens adapt, but so do immune responses.
7. Don't expect the virus to 'weaken.' Even if it becomes like a common cold, it likely won't be because it petered out, but because we've bolstered our *own* immunity and curbed its spread.
8. Covid 19 ushered in an era of amazingly speedy breakthroughs, but the learning curve is long and bends towards management more than cure.
9. Meanwhile, you know what to do.

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