

# WHO closely monitors Covid variant amid mutation concerns

 By [Katja Hamilton](#)

15 Aug 2023

The new Covid variant, which goes by the name EG.5 and has also been called Eris, is now the fastest growing Covid-19 subvariant in the US and has been found in more than 50 countries as of 8 August 2023.



Source: [Pxabay](#)

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is estimated to be responsible for around 17% of current Covid cases.

Assessing the potential danger of the variant, the WHO said Eris should be closely watched because of mutations that might make it severe and because it is highly contagious. But the chances of Eris becoming critical are low.

While it has not made its way to South Africa, the SA Medical Association has advised people to prioritise hygiene and look at practising public health measures again as a precaution.

"It is quite transmissible, more than the other sub-variants and you can imagine then that many people will be infected, and [that] it will transmit to many other countries that we know," Mvuyisi Mzukwa, chairperson of the SA Medical Association, said.

He cautioned that people with underlying medical conditions like diabetics, kidney- and heart failure, and those who are above the age of 65, are highly predisposed to being infected by the virus.

Meanwhile Pfizer, BioNTech, Moderna, and Novavax have developed updated versions of their vaccines designed to effectively counter the emerging Omicron sublineage XBB.1.5. This subvariant, similar to EG.5, carries a single mutation in its spike protein, a key target for vaccine efficacy, making the updated vaccines better tailored to combat the evolving strains of the virus.

Mandy Cohen, director of the CDC, indicated that she anticipates widespread availability of these new vaccines in the US by the third or fourth week of September.

## ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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