



## What You Might Want to Know About the Delta Variant

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### Delta Means Change

Well I guess COVID isn't done with us yet. I know we've all seen that the Delta variant has become the dominant COVID strain in the U.S. and around the world. I'm hoping I can answer some questions that people have been asking me regarding the variant.



### What is it?

The Delta variant is a mutation from the original COVID virus. Viruses are living things; they change and adapt, as do all living things. However, they can adapt very quickly and change in a generation (which can be a matter of minutes rather than 20 years). The only way to stop COVID from continuing to mutate and change into new and more virulent strains is to control the spread of the virus. It mutates and changes when hosted by a carrier; when someone gets sick they are a carrier.

### Is it more severe than regular COVID?

The Delta is not a more dangerous form of the virus. It's just 10 to 20 times more contagious (I've seen both estimates), meaning it doesn't require prolonged exposure. So if two people walk by each other, the virus can jump in seconds. The original COVID and previous variants have been less transmissible.

### Information Please?

I'm a little disappointed in our new administration. There were promises of total transparency, but it seems I'm only able to get information by looking to Israel and Britain, where they are actually taking more data and tracking things much more carefully. All I hear from this

administration is “Get your shots.” Well, it looks to me like the people who have decided to vaccinate have pretty much done so by now, except for the children.

I’m not going to get into an argument about whether or not folks should vaccinate; people have formed their opinions and are sticking there. I just would like to say that a couple of weeks ago I was literally stuck with a rusty screw, and without any hesitation at all, got my tetanus shot. I thought nothing about getting the vaccine— no controversy or questions about who made the tetanus shot. I just did not want to get tetanus.

## **Breakthrough infections**

So here we are, vaccinated and unvaccinated, with something incredibly contagious that seems to be having a lot of breakthrough infections. Heck, the whole Yankees team was just shut down because several people who had been vaccinated tested positive for COVID. We’ve been hearing from the government that you’re safe if you are vaccinated. At the same time we hear about all these breakthrough infections. So far the data indicates that a very small percentage of people who are vaccinated are getting the Delta variant. But nobody is really counting.

## **Who’s at greater risk?**

Older people and the immunocompromised.

That means folks with autoimmune disease, those who are receiving cancer treatments, or in any situation or treatment that may prevent their immune system from mounting a robust response.

According to the CDC’s website,

“People who are immunocompromised should be counseled about the potential for reduced immune responses to COVID-19 vaccines and to follow current prevention measures (including wearing a mask, staying 6 feet apart from others they don’t live with, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces, to protect themselves against COVID-19 until advised otherwise by their healthcare provider.”

What they aren’t saying yet is that these folks should get a booster shot, but some people are already doing that on their own. The CDC is saying that even though Pfizer has come up with a booster shot, we shouldn’t get it. I’m just taking an educated guess, but I think there are two reasons why the CDC is saying this. Firstly, they don’t want people who have immunity to take an additional shot and waste vaccine. We don’t know how long immunity is going to last for any of the vaccines at this point; we are just guessing. Another reason not to get a booster now may be because this thing will probably move further into the Greek alphabet and those variants of the virus may require a different type of booster.

## **Can I still be sick if I’m asymptomatic?**

We are also hearing that if you are fully vaccinated, even if you catch the Delta variant you probably are okay and may even be asymptomatic. What we don’t know is what side effects may occur if you have COVID— whether or not you have symptoms.

So, under all circumstances it's not a good idea to get COVID. Let me stress this. Even if you've had the virus, this variant is different. Whether you get a light version of COVID or an asymptomatic version, we don't know if you might still have problems down the line.

## **What to do?**

We are definitely not going back in the box; people are not willing to be quarantined again. But I'm strongly suggesting to everyone (even if you are not in a high-risk group) to wear your mask in indoor public spaces, and to avoid large indoor gatherings even if you are masked. The data is taking a long time to emerge, and we know that masks do prevent transmission— so I plead again, please wear your masks.

We are nearer to the end of this than the beginning, and if we are sensible we can get back to normal. My concern is that if we go back indoors for the winter and do not have this under control, we may end up with another six months of COVID. And nobody wants that.

Namaste,

Wendy