

NEWSCORONAVIRUS

Local experts say UK COVID-19 variant is more contagious than original virus

Florida leads the nation when it comes to the dangerous variant of COVID-19 first discovered in the UK, with at least 186 confirmed cases of the virus in the state.



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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (WTXL) — Florida leads the nation when it comes to the dangerous variant of COVID-19 first discovered in the UK, with at least 186 confirmed cases of the virus in the state.

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Local experts say UK COVID-19 variant is more contagious than original virus

The Leon County Department of Health said there are at least **two cases of the UK variant in Leon County.**

Experts in the Big Bend who've studied the virus for months say this was expected.

Right now the health department said it's working with epidemiologists to perform contact tracing so that they can monitor anyone who came into close contact with those two positive cases.

Dr. Zucai Suo is an Eminent professor at Florida State University who runs a research lab tracking the mutations of the virus.

He said the United Kingdom variant specifically is more contagious than the original virus because it enters the immune system faster and without much effort.

"For most of us we do not have the antibodies yet because we are not immunized yet so the virus has a way to basically invade our immune system and that's the point of concern right now," said Suo.

While the coronavirus vaccines help boost antibodies against the virus, the variant can cause it to be less effective.

FSU Biological Science professor Dr. Qian Yin said the symptoms are about the same as COVID-19 but warned it can infect a person much faster.

"It's more contagious it will infect more people even with the same mortality rate we'll see a higher amount of severe disease or even death," said Dr. Yin.

That's one of the reasons why Leon Department of Health officer Claudia Blackburn is asking people to continue following COVID-19 protocols.

Saying that while more COVID-19 vaccines are on the way, supplies are still very limited.

Both Moderna and Pfizer say their vaccines have proven to be effective against this variant.