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## **BF.7 Variant of the Coronavirus**

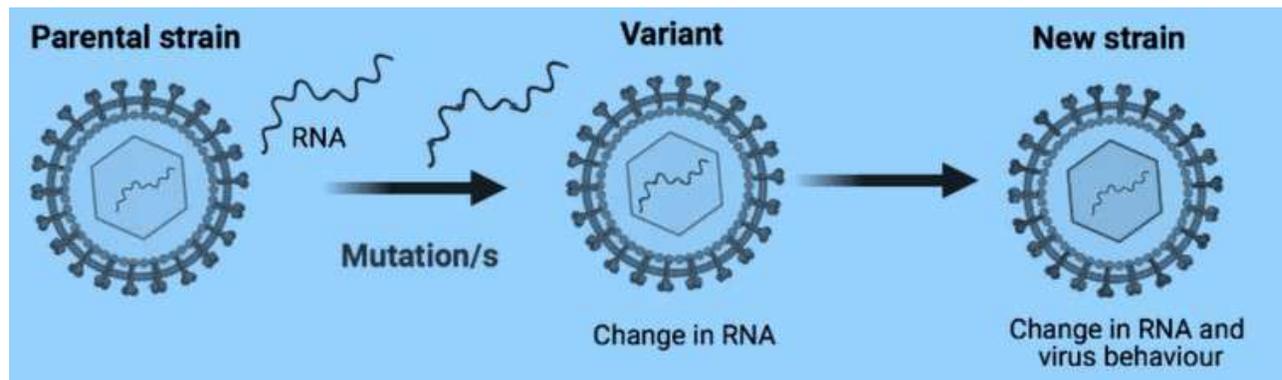
### **BF.7 Variant of the Coronavirus**

- The current surge in **Covid-19 infections in China, is believed to be driven by the BF.7 sub-variant of Omicron** that is circulating over there.

#### **What is the BF.7 Variant of Coronavirus?**

- The BF.7 is a sub-lineage of the Omicron variant BA.5. It is a highly transmissible variant with a shorter incubation period. It also has a higher capacity to cause re-infection and can even infect vaccinated individuals.
- According to a study published in the journal 'Cell Host and Microbe,' the BF.7 variant has 4.4-fold higher neutralization resistance than the original Wuhan virus. This means the antibodies from the vaccination are not effective enough against the virus.
- The dominant virus strain in China is BF.7, **a sub-variant of Omicron that has been in circulation for over a year now.**
- There are over **500 Omicron sub-variants currently in circulation.**
- **BF.7 is the name for the BA.5.2.1.7, which itself has evolved from the BA.5 sub-variant.**
- **BF.7 is not unique to China.**

## New Variants Formed



- Any changes to the viral genetic sequence during this process is **known as a Mutation**.
- Viruses with **new mutations** are sometimes called **Variants**. Variants can differ by one or multiple mutations.
- When a new variant has different functional properties to the original virus and becomes established in a population, it is sometimes referred to as a **New Strain of the virus**.
- All strains are variants, but **not all variants are strains**.

Note: The Omicron variant, variant B.1.1.529, was first reported to WHO on 24 November 2021 and was classified as a variant of concern by WHO on 26 November 2021. The classification was made on the advice of the Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution, based primarily on information from South Africa that the variant has a large number of mutations and has caused a detrimental change in COVID-19 epidemiology.

### Symptoms of Omicron BF.7 variant

- The new variant presents symptoms similar to upper respiratory infection including fever, sore throat, runny nose and cough.
- Some patients may also experience stomach-related issues including diarrhea and vomiting.

### What makes the Omicron variant different from other variants?

- All variants are different. The Omicron variant has a large number of mutations which may mean the virus acts differently from other variants that are circulating.

- As of 1 December 2021, there is limited information about Omicron. Studies are ongoing to determine if there is a change in how easily the virus spreads or the severity of disease it causes, and if there are any impacts on protective measures.
- It will likely take time before there will be clear evidence to determine if there is any change in the transmission of Omicron compared to other variants, how the variant responds to existing therapeutics, or whether infection or re-infection with Omicron causes more or less severe disease.
- WHO is working with technical partners to understand the potential impact of Omicron on vaccine effectiveness. Currently, the Delta variant is dominant worldwide and COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at protecting you from serious illness and death, including from infection with Delta. Researchers will assess the performance of current vaccines against Omicron and will communicate these findings as soon as they become available.
- WHO continues to coordinate with a large number of researchers around the world to understand more about all variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including Omicron.

Many studies are needed, including assessments of:

- Transmissibility, or ease of spread from person to person, of Omicron as compared to other variants
- Severity of infection and re-infection with Omicron
- Performance of current COVID-19 vaccines against Omicron
- Performance of diagnostic tests, including antigen tests, to detect infection with Omicron
- Effectiveness of current treatments for management of patients with COVID-19 disease
- WHO's Technical Advisory Group on Virus Evolution will continue to monitor and evaluate the data as it becomes available and assess if mutations in the Omicron variant alter the behaviour of the virus.

Source:TH