

Results of specialized tests for the sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 virus strains

The Ministry of Health, following information received from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics, was informed that in specialized tests performed on positive samples of the SARS-CoV-2 virus for the detection of strains, mutations of the virus were detected as follows:

1. British strain: Detection in 131 samples
2. Indian strain: Detection in four samples
3. South African strain: Detection in two samples.

The samples concern positive cases which were detected mainly in the period of April.

In relation to the samples where the Indian and South African strain was detected, it is noted that they concern citizens from Grey Category countries (third countries), who arrived after obtaining a special permit. On the basis of the measures taken in the Republic, **all persons arriving from Grey Category countries must remain in mandatory self-isolation for 14 days** and undergo a **PCR test either 72 hours before their departure or upon their arrival in Cyprus**. In these specific cases, these individuals had arrived from India (3 individuals), Pakistan (1 individual), the Philippines (1 individual) and Nepal (1 individual), and had been transferred to hotels of the Republic for mandatory self-isolation for 14 days. Upon testing positive, they were transferred to the special isolation area in Tersefanou and had not come in contact with other people.

Despite the measures observed at the arrival gates and the preconditions set for the arrival of passengers according to the country of arrival (e.g. double negative test, mandatory self-isolation, etc.), there is always the possibility that the mutations will enter the community. As **the new strains are more aggressive and cause increased transmissibility and spread of the virus**, the scientific community suggests that the only way **to prevent mutations and to curb the aggressive transmission they cause, is the high vaccination coverage of the population**.

For this purpose, and to achieve the shielding of Public Health, citizens are urged to continue to respond positively and en masse to the call for vaccination, thus ensuring that the risk of the virus spreading to the community is reduced and, consequently, avoid the deterioration of the epidemiological situation in the country.

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