

Results of strain sequencing tests show an increased presence of the Indian strain in the community

The Ministry of Health, following information received by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) for the results of the sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 virus strains in positive samples that were conducted in a specialized laboratory abroad, informs that **virus variants were detected in 170 samples**. The samples relate to positive cases traced **between 9 March and 11 June**.

More specifically, the following results emerge from the 170 samples:

- The B.1.1.7 strain (British strain) was detected in 158 samples.
- The B.1.617.2 strain (Indian strain – “Delta” variant) was detected in five (5) samples. The five samples identified with the Indian strain relate to positive cases sampled on 25 April (one sample), 20 May (two samples), 21 May (one sample) and 26 May (one sample).
- The B.1.525 strain was detected in seven (7) samples. According to ECDC this strain is a variant of interest and not a variant of concern such as the British, South African, Brazilian and Indian variants. At the moment, there is no scientific evidence that this variant causes more serious illness or increases contagiousness, however, competent organisations, internationally, are closely monitoring its development.

The fact that the Indian strain was detected in 2 (1.4%) out of 143 samples taken during the period 3-16 May, and in 4 (9.1%) out of 44 samples taken during the period 17-30 May, **shows an increase in the presence of the Indian strain in Cyprus**, although this has to be confirmed through more samplings in order to draw safer conclusions.

The presence of the Indian mutation in the community has already begun to **affect the epidemiological indicators** in our country **with the increase of positive cases, but also of hospitalizations, mainly of individuals under 40 years of age**. As the ECDC points out, the “Delta” variant is expected to dominate in Europe in the following period, and this sounds warning alarm for the increase of spread and of cases of serious illness, especially among young individuals.

The only way to **prevent the emergence of new invasive strains and their spread in the community is through vaccination**. The scientific community noting that in order to have the maximum desired effectiveness of vaccination, **the vaccination scheme needs to be completed** with the administration of both doses in cases of double-dose vaccines.

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