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***FIRST CASE OF B.1.351 VARIANT OF COVID-19  
CONFIRMED IN A CONNECTICUT RESIDENT  
COVID-19 strain commonly referred to as the “South African variant”***

HARTFORD – Governor Lamont and state public health officials today announced that the B.1.351 variant of the COVID-19 virus, the so-called “South African” variant, has been detected in a Connecticut patient who is currently hospitalized out of state with the virus. The individual’s condition is improving. This is the first known case of the B.1.351 variant in a Connecticut resident.

The Connecticut patient is a Fairfield County resident between the ages of 60-70 who has not travelled recently. The B.1.351 variant was reported this weekend by public health officials in New York. CT Department of Public Health and local health officials are coordinating with officials in New York; contact tracing has been completed.

Like the B.1.1.7 variant, the B.1.351 variant is more contagious and can cause more serious illness than the original COVID-19 virus. This strain of the virus was first detected in South Africa in October 2020 and was first discovered in the United States at the end of January 2021.

With 42 confirmed cases of the B.1.1.7 variant and now the discovery of the B.1.351 variant in Connecticut, public health officials reiterated the need for continued vigilance including wearing masks, social distancing, avoiding gatherings with individuals who do not reside in your household and isolating when sick.

“Seeing another variant in our state reminds us yet again the severity of this pandemic and reinforces the need for us to take all of the necessary precautions which have proven to be successful over the past year. The virus does not recognize state boundaries, and it certainly does not recognize international borders, which means the responsibility is on all of us to do what we can on a personal basis to mitigate the spread,” said **Governor Lamont**.

Acting DPH Commissioner Dr. Deidre Gifford advised that Connecticut residents should follow new CDC guidance issued last week calling for double masking in certain circumstances.

“With the variants currently circulating in the United States and in Connecticut, it is more important than ever to prevent transmission of the virus. We do that by ensuring that masks are being worn correctly and are as effective as possible. Masks should always cover the nose and mouth completely. In some instances, a cloth mask along with a surgical mask may be the best approach [according to the CDC](#), in order to prevent droplets from escaping or entering through gaps in masks,” **said Acting Commissioner Gifford.**

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