# New Covid-19 variant NB.1.8.1 spreads rapidly despite stable severity



Covid-19, which has been a global health concern for over five years, has once again taken centre stage with the emergence of a new variant known as NB.1.8.1. This strain is now responsible for just over ten per cent of global infections and has already been identified in Northern Ireland and Wales.

Introduced to the public in January 2025, the NB.1.8.1 variant has shown a rapid increase in prevalence, particularly noted in countries such as the United States, Australia, and Thailand, as well as within popular tourist destinations. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has classified it as a "variant under monitoring," reflecting its potential impact and the need for continued vigilance. According to WHO data, NB.1.8.1 accounted for approximately 10.7 per cent of all submitted genetic sequences, highlighting its growing prevalence.

Notably, while there is no evidence suggesting that NB.1.8.1 leads to more severe illness compared to earlier variants, experts warn that its ability to infect cells more efficiently may contribute to increased transmissibility. Subhash Verma, a professor at the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine, commented that data indicate NB.1.8.1 spreads more readily than previous variants, although it does not seem to cause more severe health outcomes. Symptoms associated with this variant mirror those of preceding Omicron subvariants, including fatigue, fever, muscle aches, and a sore throat. Gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhoea, constipation, and nausea have also been reported, adding complexity to the clinical picture.

Public health experts have expressed concern about the challenges posed by the declining rates of Covid-19 testing. Fewer people are conducting tests, which makes it increasingly difficult to accurately track infections. This situation raises questions about the true scope of the outbreak and the potential for NB.1.8.1 to spread undetected. The WHO has noted that as of this year, there has been a notable shift in the dynamics of SARS-CoV-2 variants globally, complicating efforts to monitor and respond to new developments.

The current Covid vaccines are anticipated to retain their effectiveness against NB.1.8.1, providing protection against severe illness for those infected. This is particularly crucial for vulnerable populations who may face greater risk from any resurgence of the virus. Experts continue to advocate for vaccination as a key tool in controlling the spread of Covid-19.

As monitoring efforts continue, health authorities emphasise the importance of staying informed about Covid-19 symptoms and the necessity of maintaining public health practices, including vaccination, to mitigate the impact of this new variant.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/covid-variant-symptoms-northern-ireland-b2762529.html), [[4]](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/community-social-care-ambulance/symptoms-of-covid-19-and-medical-advice/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/covid-variant-symptoms-northern-ireland-b2762529.html), [[2]](https://time.com/7289133/new-covid-variant-nb-181/), [[5]](https://www.northumberlandgazette.co.uk/health/summer-covid-symptoms-new-covid-variant-flirt-signs-symptoms-4683279)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/health/what-is-the-new-covid-variant-lp81-symptoms-how-to-book-your-covid-vaccine-5066414), [[6]](https://www.gbnews.com/health/new-variant-covid-symptoms-2024)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/covid-variant-symptoms-northern-ireland-b2762529.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://time.com/7289133/new-covid-variant-nb-181/> - Time magazine reports on the emergence of the NB.1.8.1 COVID-19 variant, highlighting its rapid spread in China and detection in the U.S. through airport testing. The World Health Organization has designated it as a 'variant under monitoring.' Symptoms are similar to other COVID-19 strains, including sore throat, fever, and fatigue. The article also discusses the potential for increased transmissibility due to the variant's ability to infect cells more efficiently. Vaccination remains crucial, especially for vulnerable groups, as current vaccines are expected to offer protection against severe disease. ([time.com](https://time.com/7289133/new-covid-variant-nb-181/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/health/what-is-the-new-covid-variant-lp81-symptoms-how-to-book-your-covid-vaccine-5066414> - The Northampton Chronicle discusses the LP.8.1 COVID-19 variant, noting it now accounts for over 10% of new infections. The variant was first detected in July 2024 and originates from the Omicron strain. Symptoms include a high temperature, continuous cough, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, sore throat, blocked or runny nose, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, and feeling sick or being sick. The article also provides information on the COVID spring booster programme, which began across the UK, offering vaccines to those eligible. ([northamptonchron.co.uk](https://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/health/what-is-the-new-covid-variant-lp81-symptoms-how-to-book-your-covid-vaccine-5066414?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/community-social-care-ambulance/symptoms-of-covid-19-and-medical-advice/> - The NHS England website provides comprehensive information on COVID-19 symptoms, including a high temperature, continuous cough, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, sore throat, blocked or runny nose, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, and feeling sick or being sick. It also offers guidance on when to contact a doctor and advice for individuals in residential care settings. ([england.nhs.uk](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/community-social-care-ambulance/symptoms-of-covid-19-and-medical-advice/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.northumberlandgazette.co.uk/health/summer-covid-symptoms-new-covid-variant-flirt-signs-symptoms-4683279> - The Northumberland Gazette reports on the FLiRT COVID-19 variants, including KP.3, KP.2, and KP.1.1, all descended from the JN.1 variant. Symptoms of these variants are similar to those of earlier COVID-19 strains and include a high temperature, continuous cough, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, fatigue, body aches, headache, sore throat, blocked or runny nose, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, and feeling sick or being sick. ([northumberlandgazette.co.uk](https://www.northumberlandgazette.co.uk/health/summer-covid-symptoms-new-covid-variant-flirt-signs-symptoms-4683279?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.gbnews.com/health/new-variant-covid-symptoms-2024> - GB News features Dr. Mariyam Malik discussing the symptoms of the FLiRT and LB.1 COVID-19 variants, which are similar to earlier strains. Symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, muscle or body aches, shortness of breath, headache, and runny nose. The article emphasizes the importance of staying up to date with vaccinations and regular hand-washing to prevent the spread of the virus. ([gbnews.com](https://www.gbnews.com/health/new-variant-covid-symptoms-2024?utm_source=openai))