

UK COVID variant now spreading across the US likely deadlier than original virus

[\[British scientists recently said\]](#) that there was a “realistic possibility” that the variant was not only more contagious than others, but also more lethal. Now, they [say in a new document](#) that it is “likely” that the variant is linked to an increased risk of hospitalization and death.

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The reasons for an elevated death rate are not entirely clear. Some evidence suggests that people infected with the variant may have higher viral loads, a feature that could not only make the virus more contagious but also potentially undermine the effectiveness of certain treatments.

But scientists are also trying to understand how much of the increased risk of death may stem from the propensity of the variant to spread very easily through settings like nursing homes, where people are already vulnerable.

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The variant has [spread to at least 82 countries](#), and is [being transmitted 35 to 45 percent more easily](#) than other variants in the United States, scientists recently estimated. American officials have suggested that the variant could be the [dominant source of infection there by March](#).

“The overall picture is one of something like a 40 to 60 percent increase in hospitalization risk, and risk of death,” [said] Neil Ferguson, an epidemiologist and scientific adviser to the British government.

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