

## How dangerous is the Delta COVID variant? Very — if you're not vaccinated

Here... are three simple principles to understand how [key COVID factors] interact. Each has caveats and nuances, but together, they can serve as a guide to our near-term future.

### 1. The vaccines are still beating the variants.

The vaccines have always had to contend with variants: The Alpha variant (also known as B.1.1.7) was already spreading around the world when the first COVID-19 vaccination campaigns began... Two doses of Pfizer's vaccine are still 88 percent effective at preventing symptomatic Delta infections, [according to a U.K. study](#), and [96 percent effective](#) at preventing hospitalization.

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### 2. The variants are pummeling unvaccinated people.

Vaccinated people are safer than ever despite the variants. But unvaccinated people are in more danger than ever because of the variants.

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### 3. The longer Principle No. 2 continues, the less likely No. 1 will hold.

Whenever a virus infects a new host, it makes copies of itself, with small genetic differences—mutations—that distinguish the new viruses from their parents. As an epidemic widens, so does the range of mutations... That's how we got super-transmissible variants like Alpha and Delta. And it's how we might eventually face variants that can truly infect even vaccinated people.

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