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First Detection of Delta COVID-19 B.1.617 Variant in the Health District.

Burwell, NE- Loup Basin Public Health Department (LBPHD) has received notification that two individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 have tested positive for the Delta B.1.617 variant which originated in India. The confirmatory and variant testing was performed at the Nebraska Public Health Lab. This is the first identification of the B.1.617 variant within LBPHD's nine counties and is currently a variant of concern in Nebraska. The Delta variant has been spreading throughout the states and is more transmissible and dangerous compared to other variants, says CNN.

The individuals infected with the variant virus are adults who reside in Valley County. The individuals have not received the COVID-19 vaccine and experienced moderate symptoms. Contact tracing has identified close contacts in the household, but no other community exposures were identified. Public health isolation, quarantine and testing guidance are being followed. As a result, there is not believed to be risk to the community from this new variant.

Anybody who experiences new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested. The COVID-19 vaccines have shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19 from this variant. It is still possible to contract COVID-19 after vaccination, but research has shown that your likelihood of experiencing severe symptoms or being hospitalized after being vaccinated are decreased. "New variants bring more unknowns. As new variants are identified globally, in the U.S., and in Nebraska, it reinforces the responsibility we all must get vaccinated. As more people are vaccinated the opportunity the virus has to change and mutate diminishes. Vaccinations are working. They are keeping hospitalizations low and helping reduce the spread. We must remain focused on vaccination so we can finish the race and get back to normal," stated Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Gary Anthone.

Loup Basin Public Health Department offers, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines for those who are 12+ on Tuesdays and Fridays. Walk-ins are welcomed or you can call 308-346-5795 to schedule your appointment.

If you have questions/concerns about a possible exposure, please call LBPHD at 308-346-5795.

For more information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Infection about new COVID-19 variants, please visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant.html).