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HEALTH DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES NEW COVID-19 STRAIN,
UPDATES CASE COUNTS

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indiana Department of Health today announced that a new strain of the virus that causes COVID-19 has been identified in Indiana.

The strain, which was identified through testing at the Department of Health laboratory and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is the same one identified in the United Kingdom last fall. It does not cause more severe infections, but it is much more easily spread.

"It's common for viruses to mutate, and we are seeing that occur with COVID-19," said State Health Commissioner Kris Box, M.D., FACOG. "Because this strain of the virus can be transmitted more easily, it's more important than ever that Hoosiers continue to wear their masks, practice social distancing, maintain good hygiene and get vaccinated when they are eligible."

To date, 567,338 Indiana residents are known to have had the novel coronavirus, an increase of 3,726 from Sunday. Of those, 8,643 are confirmed to have died, an increase of 30 from the previous day. Another 373 probable deaths have been reported based on clinical diagnoses in patients for whom no positive test is on record. Deaths are reported based on when data are received by the state and occurred over multiple days.

To date, 2,762,573 unique individuals have been tested in Indiana, up from 2,752,524 on Sunday. A total of 6,140,884 tests, including repeat tests for unique individuals, have been reported to the state Department of Health since Feb. 26.

To find testing sites around the state, visit www.coronavirus.in.gov and click on the COVID-19 testing information link.

Hoosiers age 80 and older, along with healthcare workers and first responders, are now eligible to receive a free COVID-19 vaccine. To find an appointment, go to https://ourshot.in.gov.

Nearly 194,000 Hoosiers have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, and nearly 24,000 have received both doses and are fully vaccinated. The Indiana Department of Health has

created a vaccine dashboard that will show the latest number of vaccines administered. The dashboard will be updated daily beginning today.