

AstraZeneca vaccine effective against UK variant: Oxford University

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Britain's Oxford University said on Friday its researchers behind the joint AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine had found it to be effective against the UK virus variant now dominant across the country.

The university, which developed the jab with the British-Swedish pharmaceutical firm, said an ongoing assessment of its effectiveness showed that it has "similar efficacy" to other coronavirus [strains](#).

"Data from our trials... in the United Kingdom indicate that the [vaccine](#) not only protects against the original pandemic [virus](#), but also protects against the novel variant," said Andrew Pollard, co-chief investigator on the Oxford vaccine trial.

The [analysis](#), which relied on samples taken between October and mid-January, also indicated the jab reduces "duration of shedding and viral load", which may translate into reduced virus transmission, the university said.

The preliminary findings, which still need to be peer reviewed, are the first to report on the efficacy of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine against new variants, it noted.

The more contagious British virus variant, which first emerged in southeast England in late September, has since become the most common strain detected in new UK infections, and spread to scores of other countries.

However, it is less clear how well the vaccines developed so far will work against several other variants that have emerged around the world, in particular a strain from South Africa that is causing concern.

Oxford said vaccine researchers are looking at ways to modify existing inoculations "quickly and simply" to protect against new variants.

"We have always expected that as the pandemic continues, new variants will begin to become dominant amongst the viruses that are circulating and that eventually a new version of the vaccine... would be required,"

said Sarah Gilbert, co-chief investigator of the Oxford trial.

"We are working with AstraZeneca to optimize the pipeline required for a strain change should one become necessary."

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