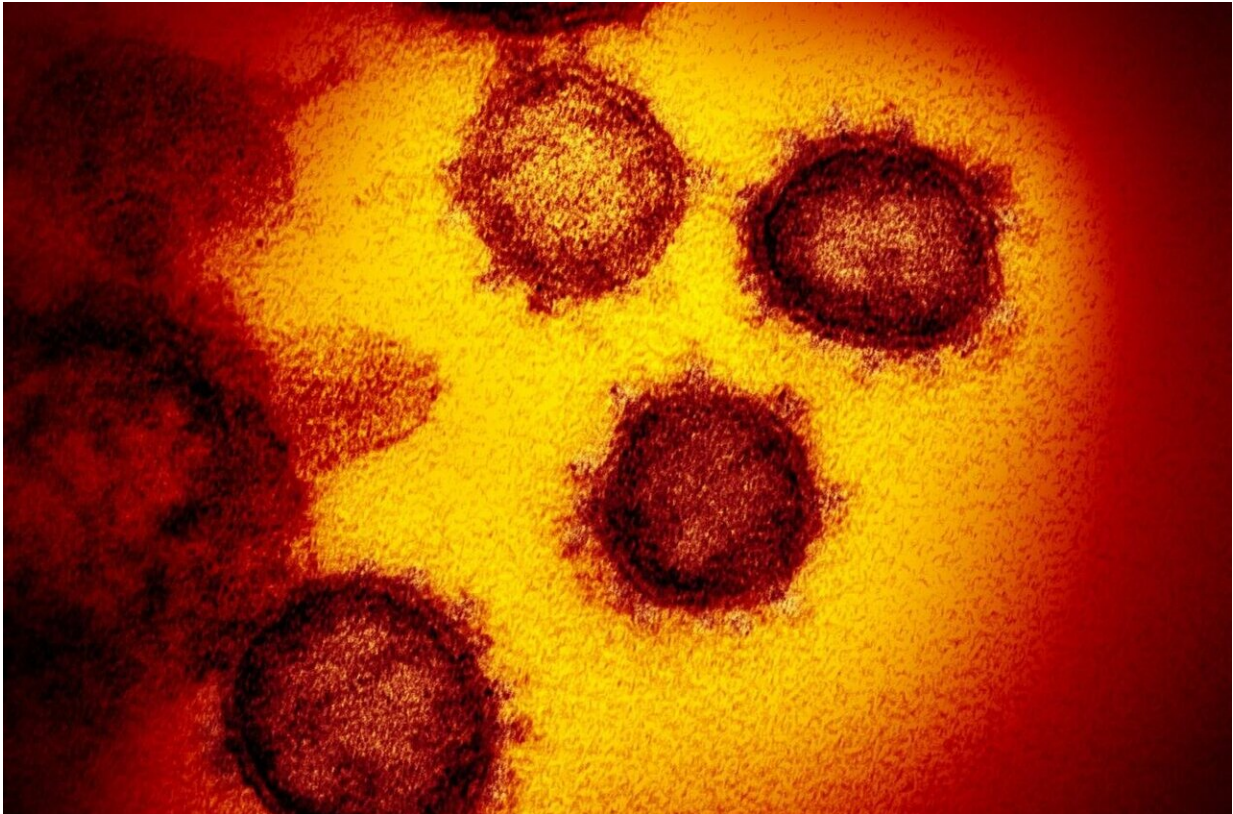


Student trip sparks virus cluster in Spain

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Transmission electron microscope image of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, emerging from human cells. Credit: NIAID

An end-of-year student trip to Spain's Balearic Islands has sparked a major coronavirus cluster with hundreds of confirmed cases and thousands of young people in quarantine across the country, officials said Friday.

In the Madrid region alone 320 youths tested positive for COVID-19, while over 2,000 have been ordered to self-isolate after spending a week on the holiday island of Mallorca, said senior city health official Elena Andradas.

"Everything indicates, after PCR tests, that it is the British variant", she told a news conference, referring to the more infectious variant of the COVID-19 virus also known as Alpha.

A total of seven of Spain's 17 regions have detected cases linked to the [student](#) trip.

The Madrid students who took part were aged 17 to 19 and they "confirmed" rules requiring the use of face masks in public were regularly flouted, Andradas said.

Staff at the eight hotels on the Mediterranean island where the students stayed are being tested for COVID-19, she added.

This cluster of cases has dominated headlines in Spain, coming as infection rates overall have been declining in recent weeks thanks to the advance of the nation's vaccination campaign.

Spain will lift the [legal requirement](#) to wear a mask outdoors from Saturday due to the improved health situation.

One in three people in Spain, 32.9 percent, are now fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and 50.1 percent have received at least one jab, according to health ministry figures.

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