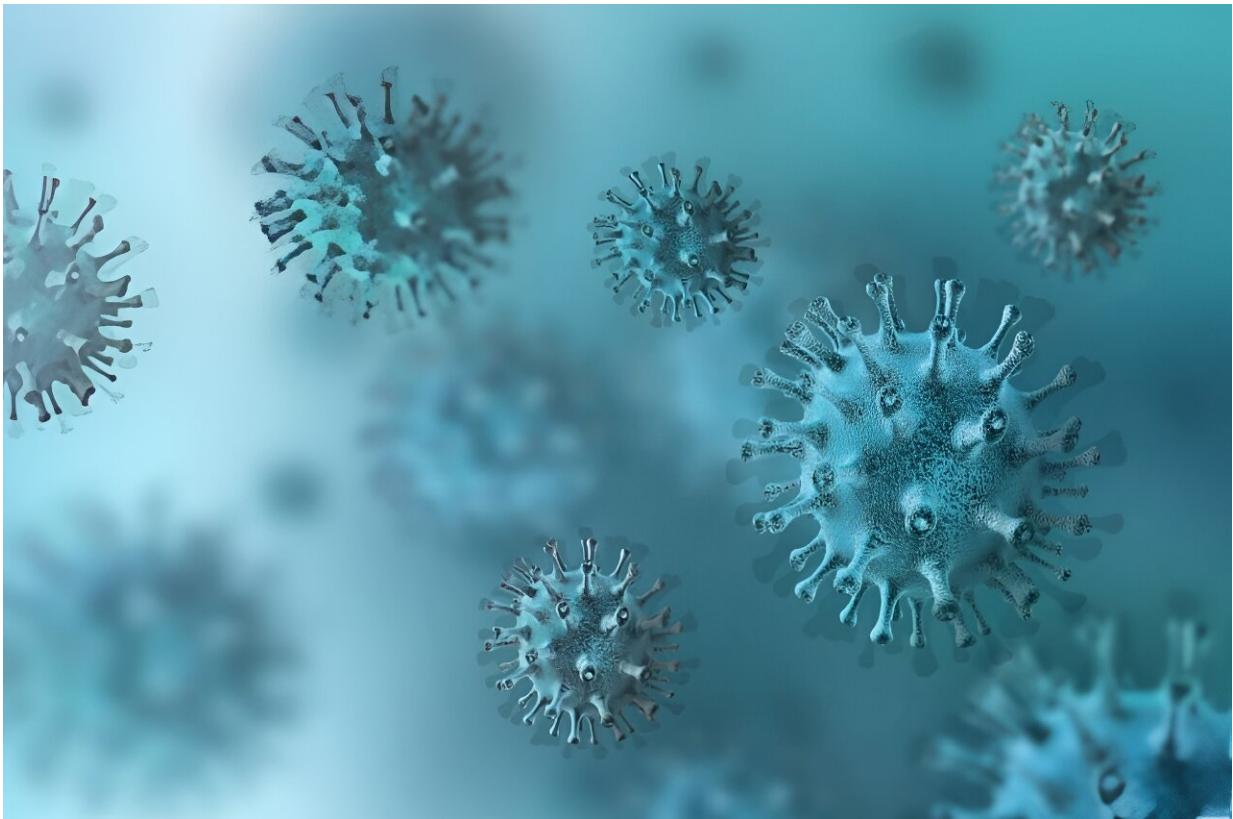


# No sign latest COVID variant leads to worse symptoms

January 24 2024, by Robin Foster

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JN.1, the COVID variant sweeping the country this winter, is not prompting more severe disease than earlier variants did, early U.S. government data suggests.

While it does not appear to be more deadly than its predecessors, the JN.1 variant has surged in recent months and now accounts for 85.7% of all U.S. cases, according to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

The agency is waiting for additional data to craft a more detailed analysis of JN.1's impact this season, Dr. Eduardo Azziz-Baumgartner, chief of the global influenza branch in CDC's Influenza Division, said during a webinar with testing laboratories hosted by the agency this week, *CBS News* reported.

Asked if JN.1's symptoms seemed to be more severe than earlier COVID waves, he said, "There are early signals that that may not be the case," based on [electronic medical records](#) and other data.

He added that a virus' effect on an individual can vary widely, however. "It could be very severe. People could die from a virus that, to the general population, may be milder."

The CDC plans to release more details about JN.1's severity "during the next couple weeks" as more data is gathered on the variant, Azziz-Baumgartner added.

Still, the CDC and other federal health agencies have not moved to deem JN.1 a [variant](#) of interest, even though the [World Health Organization](#) did just that last month.

But the WHO also [said](#) last Friday that there were "currently no reported laboratory or epidemiological reports" linking JN.1 to increased disease severity.

The CDC's experts also reported [earlier this month](#) that [hospitalization rates](#) appeared to be lower than they were last season.

Azziz-Baumgartner cautioned that data lags could be muddying the picture, and officials have also been watching for any renewed spike in the spread of the flu.

Some regions have also been reporting a strain on hospitals, especially in New England, he added.

Just last week, Massachusetts General Hospital [warned](#) it was taking steps to address an "unprecedented overcrowding" crisis, along with other hospitals in the state.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID](#).

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