

Variants of Concern

This lesson was written in August 2021 and reflects information available, and guidance issued at the time.



Objectives:

- To explain in simple terms how a virus changes (mutates).
- To explain what a 'Variant of Concern' (VoC) means.
- To know the actions we need to take to slow the spread of COVID-19, including the importance of testing.

Curriculum Links:

- **PSHE: H9.** *that bacteria and viruses can affect health; how everyday hygiene routines can limit the spread of infection*
- **English:** *give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes*

Key Vocabulary:

- Mutate
- Variant of Concern
- Virus
- Infectious
- Sequence

Resources:

- Lego - 3 identical pieces per child plus about 6 different colour or shape pieces

FAQs:

Will new variants continue to appear?

As long as the virus continues to pass from one person to another (people get infected), there is a chance it may change/mutate; higher numbers of cases means a higher chance of new variants appearing.

Are new variants always stronger/more infectious?

You will learn from this lesson, that sometimes the virus changes and becomes weaker, and sometimes it changes and it makes no difference to how the virus works, so while new variants can be stronger/more infectious this is not always the case.

Year 5-6

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Introduction:

5 mins



Give each child 3 pieces of Lego and ask them to put them together in any way they want. This could be done in pairs or groups depending on resources. Give 6 children a different colour/size piece as part of their 3 pieces.

Ask them to hide their models to come back to later.

Main Activity:

20 mins



Watch the COVID-19 Warrior Introduction video clip

Recap what the children know about Coronavirus and ask them whether they feel they still need to be careful not to catch the virus.

Talk through the PowerPoint with the children and give them a chance to ask questions.

Ask them to look at their Lego models and compare:

- How are they the same?
- How are they different?

Point out the mutations (the different ways they are formed) and compare the strength of the different models- some variants are stronger, but some are weaker. *Mutations are changes in the virus which can make it stronger (more harmful), have no difference on how harmful the virus is, or weaker (less harmful).* Mention that VOCs can allow the virus to spread more easily, & to be caught/transmitted by people who have been vaccinated.

Plenary:

5 mins



- Show WHO "Stop the spread" video clip from PowerPoint slides.
- What are the main points to remember? (The more virus spreads, the more chance of it mutating. The most effective way to stop virus mutating is to slow its spread)
- See if the children can list the ways we can limit the spread of Coronavirus.



Possible Extension Activities:

- **Word ladder activity** (see PowerPoint) - can be done as a class or individually. See how quickly a 'rug' can change into a 'car' if it is allowed to mutate.
- Ask children to choose a word of their own to mutate through a number of steps.