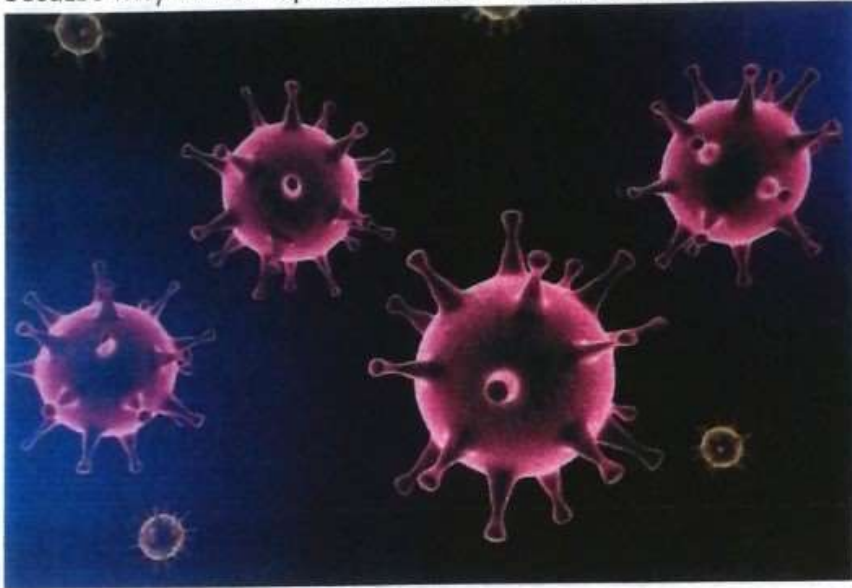


# Viruses

Viruses are very small particles that can infect animals and plants and make them sick. Viruses hijack the cells of living organisms. They inject their genetic material right into the cell and take over. They then use the cell to make more viruses and take over more cells.

Scientists differ on whether viruses are actually alive or not. Many people say they are non-living because they cannot reproduce without the aid of a host.



When viruses invade a body's cells and begin to multiply, they make the host sick. Viruses can cause all sorts of diseases. Viruses are very small and lightweight. They can float through the air, survive in water, or even on the surface of your skin. Viruses can be passed from one person to another by shaking hands, touching food, through water, or through the air when a person coughs or sneezes. Viruses can also be passed on by insect bites, animals, or through bad food.

There are many viruses that can infect people and make them sick. One of the most common is influenza which causes people to get the flu. Other diseases caused by viruses include the common cold, measles, mumps, yellow fever, and hepatitis.

There are things you can do to help reduce your chance of getting infected by a virus. Here are a few examples:

- Wash your hands (probably one of the most important ones).
- Don't put your hands or fingers in your mouth, nose, or eyes. Rubbing your nose or eyes can cause a virus on your hands to infect your body.
- Make sure your food is well-cooked, especially meat.
- Take your vitamins each day.
- Get plenty of sleep and exercise. This helps to strengthen your immune system to fight off viruses.

