

# Health Advisory: First COVID-19 Omicron Variant Case in Minnesota

Minnesota Department of Health, Thurs, Dec 02 16:00 CST 2021

## Action Steps

**Local and tribal health department:** Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, pharmacies, and convenience clinics in your jurisdiction.

**Hospitals, clinics and other facilities:** Please forward to occupational health and employee health leadership, infection preventionists, infectious disease physicians, emergency department staff, hospitalists, primary care clinicians, and all other health care providers who might see patients with COVID-19.

**Health care providers:**

- Offer vaccination to all patients who are age eligible (5 years and older) for the primary series and as indicated for an additional dose or booster dose.
- Ask patients about travel, including specific information about the country, city and dates of travel. Offer testing in accordance with CDC travel recommendations.
- Ensure that staff and leadership are aware of CDC recommendations and requirements for vaccination, testing and quarantine related to domestic and international travel. [CDC: COVID-19 Travel \(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html)
- Ask patients about attendance at large gatherings or events and offer testing.
- Report any COVID-19 cases with attendance at Anime NYC to MDH by sending an email to [HEALTH.COVID.Outbreak.Detection@state.mn.us](mailto:HEALTH.COVID.Outbreak.Detection@state.mn.us) or call 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414

## Background

- A new SARS-CoV-2 variant, lineage B.1.1.529, was first detected in Botswana on November 11, 2021, and South Africa on November 14, 2021. This new variant has a large number of mutations in portions of the genome that can potentially increase infectivity and transmissibility, confer resistance to certain therapeutics, and reduce neutralization by convalescent and vaccinee sera. For these reasons, WHO and CDC have classified B.1.1.529 as a variant of concern and named it Omicron. Omicron is rapidly being identified in additional countries and in the U.S.
- On December 1, 2021 the MDH Public Health Laboratory identified the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in a specimen from a Minnesota resident with recent travel history to New York City. The person is an adult male, is a resident of Hennepin County, and had been vaccinated. The person developed mild symptoms on November 22 and sought COVID-19 testing on November 24. The person's symptoms have resolved. The person reported traveling to New York City and attended the Anime NYC 2021 convention at the Javits Center from November 19-21. Minnesota epidemiologists will continue to investigate in collaboration with New York City and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Omicron B.1.1.529 information from CDC

(CDC: What You Need to Know About Variants (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/variant.html>))

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**Spread:** May spread more easily than other variants, including Delta.

**Severe illness and death:** Due to the small number of cases, the current severity of illness and death associated with this variant is unclear. Many of the cases reported have occurred in young, healthy people and these persons have had mild illness. However, we need to learn more about infection in the general population.

**Vaccine:** Breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated are expected, but vaccines thus far have been effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalizations, and death. Early evidence suggests that fully vaccinated people who become infected with the Omicron variant can spread the virus to others. All FDA-approved or authorized vaccines are expected to be effective against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths. The recent emergence of the Omicron variant further emphasizes the importance of vaccination and of booster doses.

**Treatments:** Some of the mutations may lead to decrease effectiveness of [monoclonal antibody treatments \(CDC: COVID-19 Treatments Your Health Care Provider Might Recommend if You Are Sick https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/treatments-for-severe-illness.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/treatments-for-severe-illness.html) against Omicron. We do not yet know the impact and will share more information as it becomes available.

### What is Minnesota doing in response?

- Continuing COVID-19 vaccination efforts.
- Continuing availability of SARS-CoV-2 testing in the community.
- Monitoring for detection of Omicron variant through whole genome sequencing ([MDH: Health Advisory: SARS-CoV-2 Variant Surveillance\(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/2021/mar25variant.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/2021/mar25variant.pdf))
- Providing regular situation updates: [Situation Update for COVID-19 - Minnesota Dept. of Health \(state.mn.us\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ep/han/2021/mar25variant.pdf)
- Continuing to share updated information and recommendations from CDC.

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network \(http://www.health.state.mn.us/han\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/han)  
The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.