

## First confirmed case of Omicron COVID-19 variant identified in Ventura County

Ventura, CA - The County of Ventura Public Health Department has received confirmation of its first case of COVID-19 with mutations consistent with the new Omicron variant (B.1.1.529). The individual, who is a fully vaccinated adult, is self-isolating, and their symptoms are improving without medical care. A small number of close contacts have been identified and, to date, all have tested negative and have no symptoms. The contacts have been asked to follow the quarantine protocol.

“Throughout the pandemic, we have always known there would be more mutations, resulting in the possibility of a more transmissible variant than the Delta variant,” said Public Health Officer Doctor Robert Levin. “While we can’t know for certain the impact of Omicron at this time, the good news is that we already know how to reduce transmission and slow spread. I encourage community members to take the steps that we know offer protection, including getting vaccinated, completing your vaccination series, or getting boosted, getting tested and staying at home if you feel sick or are a close contact, and wearing your mask indoors and at large mega events.”

Getting vaccinated or boosted is most important as we go into the holiday season where many will be traveling and gathering with others. The vaccines are effective against the Delta variant and earlier strains of the virus, which allows us to remain hopeful that the approved vaccines will also provide some protection against Omicron, especially against serious illness and death. Residents can make an appointment at the hundreds of sites across the county. For more information, visit [MyTurn.Ca.Gov](https://myturn.ca.gov) or call 833-422-4255.

Today’s Covid-19 case rate is 11.4 per 100,000 community members, which places Ventura County in the red tier of the CDC’s tiering system for tracking community transmission of COVID-19 among all US counties. “Today’s R-effective measure of 1.3 also indicates that we are experiencing a rapid increase in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Given this high and increasing level of community transmission and the possibility of a highly infectious new variant in our county, I urge all Ventura County residents to continue adhering to the measures we know help control the virus: vaccinate, get a booster, wear a mask when indoors in public places or at large outdoor mega events - regardless of vaccination status, and get tested,” said Public Health Director Rigoberto Vargas.

Testing is an important tool in early detection of infection to reduce spread and Public Health encourages residents who have traveled for the holidays to get tested if they traveled internationally or to locations in this country with high transmission rates, or they participated at gatherings and events with large numbers of people, some of which may be unvaccinated.

Residents are reminded that they should isolate if they have a positive COVID test result and that vaccinated close contacts with symptoms and unvaccinated close contacts need to quarantine.

Learn more about COVID-19 in Ventura County and available resources at [www.vcrecovers.org](http://www.vcrecovers.org).