



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### FIRST U.S. CASE OF OMICRON CORONAVIRUS VARIANT IDENTIFIED IN CALIFORNIA

CUMBERLAND, MD – The CDC has confirmed the first known U.S. case of the omicron coronavirus variant in a California resident who had recently returned from South Africa. Experts had been warning that the variant was likely already in the U.S. in the days before the announcement. The omicron variant has been labeled a variant of concern due to its rapid spread in South Africa, and it has now been identified in 23 countries. However, it is still not known how this new variant compares to previous strains in terms of symptom severity, ease of transmission, and vaccine resistance.

“Health officials are warning that omicron could be more transmissible than previous strains of COVID-19,” Maryland Governor Larry Hogan stated in a press conference on Wednesday. “And it may pose a greater risk of reinfection.” Governor Hogan went on to stress that testing and vaccinations are our best tools to combat the spread of COVID-19, urging all Marylanders to get vaccinated and follow up with a booster dose when the time comes.

COVID-19 vaccines and booster doses are available locally at pharmacies, urgent care clinics and some primary care providers. The Allegany County Health Department has several Moderna COVID-19 booster vaccine appointments available for Wednesday, December 8 at the Allegany County Fairgrounds. Interested individuals can register for an appointment at [health.maryland.gov/allegany](http://health.maryland.gov/allegany). In order to be eligible for the booster vaccine you must be age 18 or older and meet one of the following criteria:

- Received your second dose of Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at least six months ago
- Received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) COVID vaccine at least two months ago

The Allegany County Health Department will also offer the following COVID-19 vaccinations at the fairgrounds on a walk-in basis December 8 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.:

- first, second, or booster doses of Pfizer vaccine (ages 12 or older)
- first or second doses of Moderna (18 and older).

Free drive-thru COVID testing continues at the Allegany County Fairgrounds Ag Pavilion on Mondays from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m., and Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Allegany County COVID-19 case and vaccinations statistics as of November 30:

- New COVID Cases: 53 (cumulative total 10,508)
- Additional Deaths: 4 (cumulative total 271)
- Cases Per 100,000 Population: 37.53 (Maryland: 16.04)
- Positivity Rate: 8.34% (Maryland: 5.13%)
- Percent of Population Fully-Vaccinated: 47.6% (Maryland: 67.8%)

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