



**Public Health Administration**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Omicron Variant of COVID-19 Identified in Butte County**

Public Health Urges All Eligible Residents to Get Vaccinated and Boosted

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. – On December 27, 2021, Butte County Public Health (BCPH) received notification of the first identified COVID-19 Omicron variant case in a Butte County resident. The infected patient was a fully vaccinated adult Chico resident who had not yet received a booster dose. The specimen was collected 12/16/21, confirming that the Omicron variant has been in Butte County for at least 2 weeks. No further information on the infected patient is available at this time.

Scientists and Public Health experts are still learning about Omicron. While initial reports suggest Omicron *may* be less severe than earlier variants, it is still too early to know for certain. What is evident, from multiple studies in multiple countries, is that Omicron spreads much more rapidly than previous variants:

- Close contacts, especially household contacts, to persons infected with Omicron appear to be 2 to 3 times more likely to be infected as compared with contacts to persons infected with the Delta variant.
- The doubling time – the time it takes for cases in a given area to double – is 2 to 3 days, compared with approximately 2 weeks for the Delta variant. This means that even if Omicron results in fewer people with severe disease, the large number of persons infected could result in a greater number of persons needing medical attention overburdening our hospitals and healthcare providers.
- Omicron can infect persons who were previously infected with Covid-19 and persons who are fully vaccinated (2 doses of an mRNA vaccine or 1 dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine). However, fully vaccinated people still have significant protection against severe disease. A booster dose provides substantial additional protection against Omicron.

### **Everyone can do their part in protecting themselves and others from Omicron.**

**Get vaccinated.** All eligible people can get their COVID-19 vaccine, and if fully vaccinated, receive their booster dose. Vaccines are our best protection against COVID-19. Vaccines are safe and effective in preventing hospitalization, serious illness or death due to COVID-19. The more people who are vaccinated, the lower the chance that any variant, including Omicron, will overwhelm our healthcare system. Butte County residents can find a COVID-19 vaccine by visiting: [MyTurn.ca.gov](https://MyTurn.ca.gov).

- **Wear an effective mask.** Wearing the right type of facemask in public indoor settings will protect you and others around. For facemask recommendations see [guidance for face coverings \(ca.gov\)](#)
- **Get tested.** Get a COVID-19 test before attending family or public gatherings, if feeling sick, or if you think you were exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **If sick, isolate** according to CDPH guidance [Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19 Contact Tracing \(ca.gov\)](#)
- **If exposed and not sick, quarantine** as needed according to CDPH guidance [Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine for COVID-19 Contact Tracing \(ca.gov\)](#)

Many symptoms of COVID-19 resemble those of a cold, flu and allergies. Anyone experiencing the following symptoms should stay home and get tested for COVID-19. [Free testing is available throughout Butte County](#) ([www.buttecounty.net/ph/COVID19/Testing](http://www.buttecounty.net/ph/COVID19/Testing)); residents may also contact their healthcare provider or area pharmacies to receive a test:

- Congestion or a runny nose
- Sore throat
- Fever or chills
- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue, muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea
- New loss of taste or smell (not typically seen with Omicron)

For more information about variants in California, please visit: [tinyurl.com/292z7zaw](https://tinyurl.com/292z7zaw)

The California Department of Public Health is working with local health departments to allocate oral antiviral medications for use in treating COVID-19. These medications will be available by prescription only at select pharmacies. More information will be released as it becomes available.

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