



What Does the Omicron Variant Mean for Your Business?

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What is the COVID-19 Omicron variant?

Omicron is a COVID-19 variant labeled as a variant of concern by the World Health Organization on [November 26, 2021](#). From January 2nd to January 22nd, the Omicron variant was confirmed in at least 96% of test samples from positive cases in Pima County that were selected for confirmation of the variant type and is the primary reason for the most recent wave of COVID-19 infections.

What is happening with new COVID-19 infections in Pima County?

As of February 8th, 2022, Pima County has a [high COVID-19 transmission level](#). A county has a high transmission level when the number of new positive cases is more than 100 cases per 100,000 [persons for two weeks in a row](#). During the week ending on January 16th when COVID-19 cases peaked in January in Pima County, the weekly case rate was [1,896 cases per 100,000 persons](#). For the week of January 24th, 2022, the weekly case rate in Pima County was about [1,312 cases per 100,000 persons](#).

Since December 21st, 2021, Pima County is [requiring everyone in the County](#) to wear a face covering in indoor public settings when six feet of physical distance cannot be maintained.

Is Omicron more contagious than the Delta variant?

The Omicron variant has been shown to be about four times more contagious than the Delta variant. [Multiple recent studies](#) suggest Omicron is more contagious than Delta because Omicron is better at infecting the upper respiratory tract than the Delta variant. The incubation period, or the time between when you are exposed to a virus and when symptoms begin to show, for the Delta variant is about four days. For Omicron, the incubation period is [three days](#).

Are the symptoms of the Omicron variant more severe?

Omicron is more likely to cause less severe illness. Symptoms include cough, fever, dry throat, loss of smell, headache, sore throat, and runny nose.

Vaccination status also may determine how serious your symptoms may be if you get infected with Omicron.

A [CDC study](#) showed that having two doses and a booster shot was the most effective method at preventing hospitalization, followed by having two vaccine doses with at least six months having passed since the second dose. Unvaccinated people faced the [highest risk](#) of developing severe illness from infection of the Omicron variant.

Note: All COVID-19 variants can cause severe disease and in some cases death. Prevention is always key.



What if I'm vaccinated, will I be safe? Do I need to wear a mask?

[Vaccines do](#) provide protection against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths from infection with the Omicron variant.

However, vaccines are not 100% effective at preventing infection, and breakthrough infections in fully vaccinated people [can occur](#). A vaccinated person can still carry a COVID-19 variant, such as Omicron, and spread the virus to vaccinated and unvaccinated persons.

The CDC [emphasizes](#) that people should get [fully vaccinated](#) and get their booster shots if already vaccinated. The CDC also recommends [that vaccinated people should wear a mask](#) when indoors with other people [in areas of high](#) transmission.

Is there testing available for the Omicron Variant?

You cannot get tested specifically for the Omicron variant. It is still recommended that you take a [COVID-19 test](#) if you are experiencing symptoms. If you get tested, your test sample may be sent to a lab can determine its variant type. You would most likely not receive these results. Instead, they would go to [public health officials to monitor](#) the variants that are most common in the population.

Do I need to take any specific steps in my business for the Omicron variant?

Under the current Omicron wave, you should continue to follow COVID-19 safety precautions such as:

- Strongly encourage workers and clients to wear facemasks inside your business regardless of vaccination status
- Limit the number of customers and employees
- Improve indoor ventilation
- Regularly disinfect and clean workspaces
- Wash or sanitize your hands often

For the top 10 actions you can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your business, [click here](#). You can also look at the "[Supporting Small Businesses During COVID-19](#)" Web page for other COVID-19 resources.

Will there be other variants like Omicron in the future?

Most likely. Since viruses are always changing, we can expect variants to happen. Changes happen when the virus moves to a new person and begins to grow by making copies of itself. Sometimes the copies are not perfect, and these mistakes are considered variants.

Most of these changes usually make a virus weaker. Variations can let the virus spread more easily or make it resistant to treatments or vaccines. For example, the subvariant BA.2 of Omicron, also known as the "stealth Omicron" because it has DNA that makes it harder to tell apart from the Delta variant in PCR tests, spreads more easily than the original Omicron variant but does not seem to cause more serious illness than the original Omicron strain.



A list of the variants in the United States that are being monitored right now can be found [here](#).

Are there different recommendations for isolation if I become infected with the Omicron variant?

As of December 27, 2021, the [CDC](#) updated its isolation and quarantine recommendations based on what is currently known about the Omicron variant.

The CDC recommends the following isolation procedures for people **who test positive for COVID-19**:

Vaccination Status	Isolation Procedures
For all, <u>regardless of vaccination status</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay home for 5 days.• If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving (without fever for 24 hours) after 5 days, you can leave your house.• Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.• If possible, test on day 5 <p><i>If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.</i></p>



As of December 27, 2021, the [CDC](#) recommends the following quarantine procedures for people who are exposed to someone with COVID-19:

Vaccination Status	Quarantine Procedures
<p>If you:</p> <p><u>Have been boosted</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p><u>Completed the primary series (initial 2 doses) of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p><u>Completed the primary dose of J&J vaccine within the last 2 months</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wear a mask around others for 10 days.• Test on day 5, if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home.</i></p>
<p>If you:</p> <p><u>Completed the primary series (initial 2 doses) of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p><u>Completed the primary dose of J&J over 2 months ago and are not boosted</u></p> <p>OR</p> <p><u>Are unvaccinated</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay home for 5 days. After 5 days, continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.• If you can't quarantine you must wear a mask for 10 days.• Test on day 5 if possible. <p><i>If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home</i></p>