

Missouri announces first case of COVID-19 caused by Omicron variant

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Update:

This news release has been updated to reflect CDC's confirmation of the Omicron variant on Dec. 4, 2021.

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Today, the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) announced the state's first case of the SARS-CoV-2 variant named Omicron. One week ago, the World Health Organization classified this variant, B.1.1.529, now known as Omicron, as a Variant of Concern due to identified concerning types of mutations.

"Although there is much we still need to learn about this new variant, we do know the best tool currently available to protect ourselves from COVID-19 is personal prevention. I urge Missourians to seek information on the Omicron variant from DHSS and trusted medical sources opposed to social media," said Donald Kauerauf, DHSS Director. "We also encourage Missourians to remain vigilant in protecting themselves and staying informed this holiday season as this new variant is investigated further."

Public health experts worldwide are working quickly to learn more about the Omicron variant and how it may impact the health and safety of citizens. The transmissibility and disease severity caused by Omicron are still unknown. Scientists are also studying the degree to which existing vaccines and therapies protect against Omicron.

DHSS was notified on Dec. 3, 2021, by public health partners of a sample presumed positive for the Omicron variant originating from a St. Louis City resident who had recent domestic travel history. The sample was originally sequenced as part of commercial laboratory surveillance and received confirmation by the CDC on Dec. 4, 2021.

"The Delta variant is still the predominant variant present in Missouri, currently representing well over 99 percent of the cases. Citizens are urged to complete their vaccination series for COVID-19 and get their booster," said Kauerauf.

DHSS will continue to work with public health partners to monitor for an increase in the Omicron variant, as well as trends in other variants. To learn more about Missouri's variant monitoring efforts, visit [Health.Mo.Gov](https://www.health.mo.gov).

DHSS has been regularly providing the public with actionable information to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The agency continues to recommend that residents follow prevention strategies such as wearing a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high community transmission, frequent handwashing and maintaining physical distance from others.

Everyone 5 years and older is highly encouraged to protect themselves from COVID-19 by getting fully vaccinated (and boosted if age 18 and older). Missourians should also take the opportunity to get their annual influenza vaccination as part of their risk reduction activities to protect themselves and others from seasonal respiratory illness.

Travelers to the U.S. should continue to follow CDC recommendations for safe traveling. Get the facts about COVID-19 vaccines in Missouri at [MOStopsCovid.com](https://www.mostopsCovid.com).

How Missourians can get a free COVID-19 vaccine:

- Check for vaccine appointments at [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), where you can search for availability by vaccine type (e.g., Pfizer).
- Call the CDC's COVID-19 vaccine hotline at 1-800-232-0233 (or TTY 1-888-720-7489). Help is available in multiple languages.
- Locate local vaccination events in Missouri at [MOStopsCovid.com](https://moplastscovid.com).
- Seniors and homebound adults can make arrangements using information at [MOStopsCovid.com/seniors](https://moplastscovid.com/seniors)
 - Missouri DHSS COVID-19 Public Hotline
 - 1-877-435-8411
 - Mon.-Fri., 7:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

How Missourians can get a free COVID-19 test:

- Walk in or schedule an appointment for a test at one of the state's free community testing sites: [COVID-19 Community Testing Sites](#).
- Order a test through the state's free [at-home COVID-19 testing program](#).
- Find a free testing option near you through the [federal pharmacy locations](#).