

San Mateo County Health
Statement for School Districts Regarding New Variant of Concern – Omicron

On November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified a new variant, B.1.1.529, as a Variant of Concern and has named it Omicron <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-11-2021-update-on-omicron>.

This variant was first reported from South Africa, but there are already preliminary reports of detections in many other continents.

This variant has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning for “an increased risk of reinfection”, and is being further studied.

On November 28, 2021, CDPH issued [a statement](#) and [fact sheet on](#) Omicron Variant, which emphasize the importance of “vaccinations and boosters to prevent serious illness and deaths” and the important role of testing and isolation if symptoms develop.

The Omicron strain is likely in other countries (beyond the 8 listed by CDPH), so San Mateo County Health currently emphasizes the existing [CDC recommendations for US residents](#) (e.g., most students) returning from any international travel. This includes (as of 11/30/21):

1. All Travelers
 1. **Get tested** with a COVID-19 viral test 3-5 days after travel.
 2. **Self-monitor** for COVID-19 symptoms; **isolate** and **get tested if you develop symptoms**.
 3. Follow all state and local recommendations or requirements after travel.
2. If you are NOT fully Vaccinated
 1. Stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel, even if you test negative at 3-5 days.
 2. If you don’t get tested, stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.

San Mateo County Office of Education and San Mateo County Health continue to work closely together with school districts, healthcare agencies, and CDPH to monitor the pandemic; and consider its impact on education.

Whereas the situation and our understanding of the Omicron variant will quickly evolve in the next few days, it’s important to understand that in the future, San Mateo County can be affected by such mutations occurring anywhere in the world.

Each dose of the safe and effective vaccines prevents infections, severe disease, and transmission to close contacts.

December 2, 2021

The “future” will emphasize “**caring for COVID yourself** and to **help protect other people in your home and community**”, including testing, self-monitoring, and isolating from others. See CDC guidance on caring for yourself and others.