



Public Health Division

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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OMICRON VARIANT IDENTIFIED IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY: Santa Cruz County Public Health has been notified that two COVID-19 samples collected locally on Dec. 16th and 17th were identified as having the mutation known as the Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant. The individuals are North County residents in their mid-20s. A case investigation is underway.

“While we must remain vigilant against COVID-19 and Omicron, this new variant is not a cause for panic. It is important that we collectively focus on the things we know prevent the spread of COVID-19 and its variants,” said Dr. Cal Gordon, Santa Cruz County Deputy Health Officer.

Individuals should **1) get vaccinated and boosted 2) wear a mask indoors and in crowded settings 3) get tested if symptomatic or exposed; and 4) stay home if sick.** Everyone 5 years and older is eligible for a vaccine and everyone 16 years and older is eligible for a booster.

With the holiday season upon us, people should be extra mindful of risks. If people must travel or gather for the holidays:

- Get tested immediately before visitation or travel, upon return, and again 3-5 days later.
- Keep group gatherings small in size and duration.
- Gather outside or keep rooms well ventilated if indoors.
- Remember to always wear a mask whenever indoors with persons from outside your household and ask guests to do the same.
- Be especially cautious around elderly, immunocompromised, and those who have not been vaccinated. Consider COVID-19 testing before such interactions.

In addition, Santa Cruz County Public Health has updated how COVID-19 contact tracing is conducted and is using the State’s Contact Tracing Virtual Assistant. Residents may receive a text message from the number 23393 which is the California COVID-19 Response Team. Contact tracers are attempting to get important information about a possible case or exposure. Responding to the text will help stop the spread of COVID-19.

For local information on COVID-19 including on where to get vaccinated or tested go to www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus or call (831) 454-4242 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.