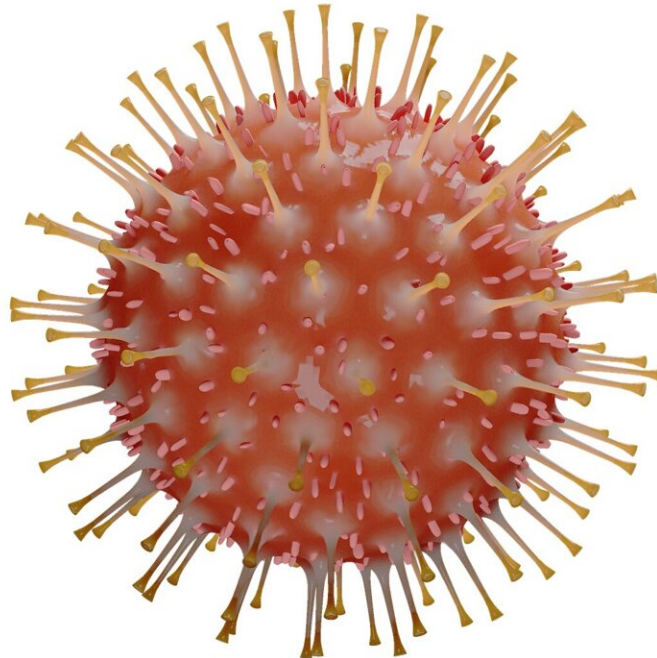


Video: Observing the emergence of omicron variant

December 3 2021



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

While there are more questions than answers right now, concern is growing about the emergence of the new COVID-19 strain called omicron.

While no cases of the variant have been confirmed in the U.S., Mayo Clinic is closely monitoring the research and clinical observations that

are underway and will use this time to thoroughly evaluate evidence as it becomes available.

Dr. Gregory Poland, an infectious disease specialist and head of Mayo Clinic's Vaccine Research Group, says the variant was first identified Nov. 9 in Botswana, and it now has become the dominant variant in South Africa.

"The question is, is this virus—this variant—more transmissible? The early data—this is really early—suggest that it may be two to six times more transmissible than delta. Well, does that necessarily mean that it's more virulent? Does it have more ability to cause disease? We don't know."

What's concerning, says Dr. Poland, is the genetic difference between the omicron variant and the original strain. He says it's larger than any other [variant](#) that has been seen.

So what should you do?

Dr. Poland says to take the precautions that are known to be effective and can protect against current [strains](#):

- Get your primary COVID-19 vaccination series.
- Get your COVID-19 booster vaccination when you're eligible.
- Wear a mask when you're indoors.

He adds that travel is probably not a good idea until the picture becomes clearer.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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