



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**This is an official  
MS Health Alert Network (HAN) Alert**

**MESSAGE ID:** MSHAN-20211130-00547-ALT (Health Alert)  
**RECIPIENTS:** All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, and  
Healthcare Providers – Statewide  
Tuesday, November 30, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Emergence of Omicron Variant of SARS-CoV-2

Dear Colleagues,

As you are all aware, South Africa recently identified a new variant strain of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The variant strain, B.1.1.529, or Omicron, was classified as a variant of concern on November 26, 2021, by the World Health Organization.

Additionally, the White House issued a Presidential Proclamation that became effective on November 29, 2021, restricting US entry of noncitizens who were physically present in the Republic of Botswana, the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Kingdom of Lesotho, the Republic of Malawi, the Republic of Mozambique, the Republic of Namibia, the Republic of South Africa, and the Republic of Zimbabwe during the prior 14-day period ([A Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease 2019 | The White House](#)).

There is still much to learn about Omicron and its potential impacts, including transmissibility, effectiveness of vaccines and effectiveness of prior natural immunity, and severity of illness.

**The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) has a robust variant surveillance system in the state to detect new variants as they emerge. To enhance efforts to identify the Omicron strain in Mississippi, and to limit the potential transmission from international travelers, MSDH is asking providers to:**

- Submit PCR samples for genomic sequencing to the Mississippi Public Health Laboratory (MPHL) on any PCR or antigen positive individuals with any international travel within the prior 14 days.
- Recommend a 7-day quarantine and collect a PCR test at 3-5 days after their last day in the country for any patients with recent travel from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, or Zimbabwe.
- Continue to recommend vaccination for everyone 5 years and older, boosters for those eligible, and mask use in public indoor settings in areas of substantial or high community transmission, regardless of vaccination status (masks are recommended for unvaccinated individuals in public indoor settings regardless of community transmission levels).

Please call the MSDH Office of Epidemiology at 601-576-7725 with questions.

Regards,

Paul Byers, MD  
State Epidemiologist

570 East Woodrow Wilson • Post Office Box 1700 • Jackson, MS 39215-1700  
601-576-8090 • 1-866-HLTHY4U • [www.HealthyMS.com](http://www.HealthyMS.com)

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**Alerting Message Specification Settings**

**Originating Agency:** Mississippi State Department of Health  
**Alerting Program:** MS Health Alert Network (MS HAN)  
**Message Identifier:** MSHAN-20211130-00547-ALT  
**Program (HAN) Type:** Health Alert  
**Status (Type):** Actual ()  
**Message Type:** Alert  
**Reference:** MSHAN-00547  
**Severity:** Unknown  
**Acknowledgement:** No  
**Sensitive:** Not Sensitive  
**Message Expiration:** Undetermined  
**Urgency:** Undetermined  
**Delivery Time:** 600 minutes

**Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings**

**Originating Agency:** A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.

**Alerting Program:** The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.

**Message Identifier:** A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT (**ALT=Health Alert**, **ADV=Health Advisory**, **UPD=Health Update**, **MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service**)).

**Program (HAN) Type:** Categories of Health Alert Messages.

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

**Health Info Service:** Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

**Status (Type):**

- Actual: Communication or alert refers to a live event
- Exercise: Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
- Test: Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded

**Message Type:**

- Alert: Indicates an original Alert
- Update: Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
- Cancel: Indicates prior alert has been cancelled

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**Error:** Indicates prior alert has been retracted

**Reference:** For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

**Severity:**

Extreme: Extraordinary threat to life or property  
Severe: Significant threat to life or property  
Moderate: Possible threat to life or property  
Minor: Minimal threat to life or property  
Unknown: Unknown threat to life or property

**Acknowledgement:** Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

**Sensitive:**

Sensitive: Indicates the alert contains sensitive content  
Not Sensitive: Indicates non-sensitive content

**Message Expiration:** Undetermined.

**Urgency:** Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

**Delivery Time:** Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).