

Omicron cases pass U.S. peak seen with delta, but with fewer hospitalizations

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(HealthDay)—COVID-19 is again surging throughout the United States,

with the Omicron variant already outpacing this summer's Delta variant in the rate of daily cases.

However, numbers of hospitalizations have not yet reached those surging numbers this holiday season, according to *CNN*. That may not last, experts warn, because tens of millions of Americans continue to be at higher risk of complications and death because they're not vaccinated.

"Although hospitalizations may be less, that doesn't mean zero. There are many places in the country where hospitalizations now are increasing," Dr. William Schaffner, a professor at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn., told *CNN*.

So far, 12 states have had at least a 10% increase in COVID hospitalizations this past week, according to U.S. Health and Human Services data. Overall, the country has seen a 2% increase in hospitalizations.

More than 69,000 Americans were hospitalized on Christmas Eve, the data shows. That is half last of last January's record high and lower than during the [Delta](#) surge, according to *CNN*.

The relatively low rate of hospitalizations could be due to a time lag, with hospitalizations only catching up with rising case numbers later. Researchers are still trying to determine if [Omicron](#) is less likely to cause severe illness, *CNN* reported. So, [health experts](#) and [government officials](#) have warned that Omicron could still overwhelm hospitals and healthcare workers.

COVID cases increased 48% over the past week. The average daily cases in the United States are now 182,682, according to [Johns Hopkins University](#).

Prior to Christmas, [testing](#) shortages meant long lines in many metro areas.

Los Angeles County reported tripling case numbers in the last week, with 9,998 new cases for its roughly 10 million residents. Hospitalizations remained steady, *CNN* reported.

On the other side of the country, New York had a record-breaking 44,431 new daily cases on Friday, a 14% increase from Thursday.

"This is not a surprise," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said. "This is a very, very contagious variant."

More information: The World Health Organization has more on [COVID-19](#).

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