

Omicron is dominant in wastewater samples in Florida county

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The Cinderella Castle at the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World is seen at the theme park, Aug. 30, 2021, in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. Disney has paused its policy requiring Florida-based employees to take the COVID-19 vaccine following new laws passed by the state's legislature last week that limit employers' power to require vaccinations, according to a memo sent to employees. The company informed employees in a memo sent Friday that it has paused the requirement due to the state legislature's action during a special session last week, and because of an appeal court's temporary delay of federal

vaccination guidelines from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Orlando Sentinel reported. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux, file

Even though there have been practically no cases of clinical infection, wastewater samples show that the new omicron variant is now the dominant strain of COVID-19 in the Florida county that is home to the nation's largest theme park resorts, officials said this week.

The [omicron variant](#) has quickly surpassed the delta variant in collections taken from wastewater sampling sites in Orange County, officials said.

A sampling this week showed that omicron represented almost 100% of the strains in the samples from the wastewater facilities, Orange County Utilities spokesperson Sarah Lux said in an email.

It's a different story when it comes to people seeking treatment for COVID-19, officials said.

"Those who are hospitalized are being primarily infected by the [delta variant](#)," Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings said Wednesday at a news conference held at the Orlando International Airport.

Although tourist numbers have dropped since the start of the pandemic, tens of millions still travel to Orlando each year to visit the area's famous theme parks, including Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando.

Scientists have said omicron is more contagious than delta, but it's [unclear whether omicron's rapid spread will overwhelm hospitals](#). They said it's too soon to draw conclusions since the variant is quite new and hospitalizations can lag weeks behind infections.

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