

# New York reports 5 Omicron cases, U.S. total rises to 9

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(HealthDay)—Five cases of the Omicron coronavirus variant have been detected in New York state, one in Minnesota and one in Hawaii, officials in those states announced Thursday.

That brings the known total in the United States to nine, with California and Colorado previously announcing one case each.

One of the New York cases is a 67-year-old woman who traveled to South Africa, returned to the United States on Nov. 25 and tested positive on Nov. 30. She had received at least one dose of vaccine and has "[mild symptoms](#)," New York Governor Kathy Hochul said at a news conference Thursday, *CBS News* reported.

There was [limited information](#) on the state's other four cases.

New York and Hawaii officials said they believe the Omicron variant is now spreading in their states, causing infections not associated with international travel, *CBS News* reported.

"This is not just due to people who are traveling to Southern Africa or to other parts of the world where Omicron has already been identified. So that's the most important sort of epidemiological takeaway that we want to convey," Dr. Dave Chokshi, New York City's top health official, told reporters Thursday.

Minnesota officials said their first case is in a resident who traveled to New York City in November for an anime convention attended by 53,000 people. However, New York authorities don't believe the five new cases they announced Thursday are linked to the convention, *CBS News* reported.

Both cases occurring in California and Colorado occurred in people recently returned from Africa.

Contact tracing is underway for the people who may have been exposed at the Anime NYC 2021 convention. "All attendees should receive an email or call from the NYC Test and Trace Corps or their local health

departments with further information and recommended next steps. You are strongly advised to get tested," the Anime NYC 2021 organizers said in a Twitter post.

New York state is not planning new shutdowns or rules but is urging residents to get vaccinated, wear masks and avoid large gatherings, Hochul said.

The Hawaii case appears to be the first Omicron infection in the United States in an unvaccinated adult. Officials said the patient is younger than 65, has "mild to moderate" symptoms so far and had no travel history outside of Hawaii, *CBS News* reported.

The patient previously survived a bout of COVID-19 over a year ago, state officials noted.

Omicron has raised concerns among experts because it contains an unexpectedly large number of mutations, and scientists worry that it could prove resistant to immune system antibodies produced by either prior infection or vaccines.

Still, the nation's top expert on infectious disease, Dr. Anthony Fauci, believes vaccines plus booster shots should offer some protection.

"Although partial immune escape may occur, vaccines, and particularly boosters, give a level of antibody that even with variants like Delta give you a degree of cross-protection, particularly against severe disease," Fauci said on Tuesday.

In the meantime, President Joe Biden on Thursday announced a new round of measures to protect Americans against the spread of coronavirus variants such as Omicron as winter approaches. The strategy will include making rapid at-home COVID-19 tests free for more

people, extending rules on mask wearing on planes and other modes of transport, launching public awareness campaigns on vaccinations and booster shots, starting family mobile vaccination clinics, and implementing tougher testing requirements for travelers arriving in the country.

**More information:** Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [COVID variants](#).

SOURCE: *CBS News*

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