

US to distribute 1 bln COVID tests in latest Omicron fight

January 13 2022



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US President Joe Biden on Thursday said the government will double its purchase of COVID-19 tests with an extra 500 million kits, bringing the total to one billion.

As the United States struggles against the Omicron variant sweeping the world, Biden urged Americans to wear good quality masks as "part of your patriotic duty."

However, the White House faces pressure over the lack of easily available COVID tests, stymying efforts to keep schools open and get people to work when Omicron infections are surging.

Biden defended the response, saying about 15 million tests were being administered every day, compared to two million when he took office a year ago.

"Today I'm directing my team to procure an additional 500 million more tests to distribute for free," he said. The tests will be available via a soon-to-be launched government website, he said.

Ending his remarks at the White House, Biden made "a special appeal to [social media](#)."

"The misinformation and disinformation. It's on your shows—it has to stop," he said.

"It's been a long road but what's clear is that the way we get through this is everybody does their part..., no matter your [political party](#)," he said.

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Citation: US to distribute 1 bln COVID tests in latest Omicron fight (2022, January 13) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-blncovid-latest-omicron.html>

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