

# Israel records new COVID variant

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Israel's ministry of health said Wednesday it had recorded two cases of new COVID variant, but which officials said they were not unduly worried about.

The strain, combining two sub-variants of the Omicron version of the COVID-19 virus—dubbed BA.1 and BA.2—was recorded during PCR tests on two passengers arriving at Israel's Ben Gurion airport.

"This [variant](#) is still unknown around the world," the ministry statement read.

"The two cases of the combined strain, which have been discovered so far, suffered from mild symptoms of fever, headaches and muscle dystrophy, and do not require a special medical response," it added.

Israel's pandemic response chief, Salman Zarka, played down the risks.

"The phenomenon of combined variants is well known," Zarka told Army Radio. "At this stage, we are not worried about it leading to serious cases".

More than four million people out of Israel's population of 9.2 million have received three coronavirus vaccine shots.

A total of almost 1.4 million cases of COVID infection, including 8,244 deaths, have been officially recorded in the country.

Last month, Israel announced that unvaccinated tourists would be allowed to enter as part of an easing of COVID restrictions.

The country was seeing a "consistent decline in morbidity data," Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said.

A previous effort to reopen the border last November foundered after just a few weeks because of the fast-spreading Omicron variant.

Israel was one of the first countries to launch a national vaccination

campaign in December 2020.

Earlier this month, the government announced it would provide fourth COVID vaccine shots to people over 60 and [health workers](#), amid a surge driven by the Omicron variant.

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