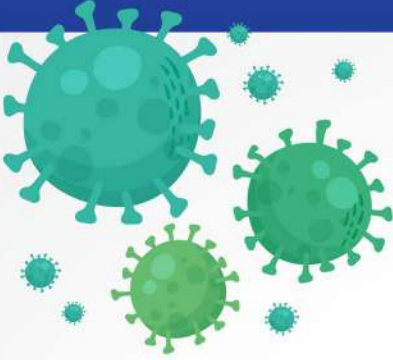


COVID-19 OMICRON VARIANT



All viruses, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, change over time. Most changes have little to no impact on the virus' properties. However, some changes may affect the virus's properties, such as how easily it spreads, the associated disease severity, or the performance of vaccines, therapeutic medicines, diagnostic tools, or other public health and social measures.

EMERGENCE OF OMICRON



November 24, 2021

A new variant of SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.529 was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). This new variant was first detected in specimens collected on November 11, 2021 in Botswana and on November 14, 2021 in South Africa.

November 26, 2021

WHO named the B.1.1.529 Omicron and classified it as a Variant of Concern (VOC).

December 15, 2021

The first 2 confirmed cases of Omicron was identified in the Philippines

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OMICRON



SPREAD

- It likely will spread more easily than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus
- Anyone with Omicron infection can spread the virus to others, even if they are vaccinated or don't have symptoms

SEVERE ILLNESS

More data needed to know if Omicron infections, and especially reinfections and breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated, cause more severe illness or death than infection with other variants

VACCINES

- Current vaccines are expected to protect against severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths due to infection with the Omicron variant.
- Breakthrough infections in people who are fully vaccinated are likely to occur.
- The recent emergence of Omicron further emphasizes the importance of vaccination and boosters.



New variants of the virus are expected to occur. Taking steps to reduce the spread of infection, including getting a COVID-19 vaccine, are the best way to slow the emergence of new variants.