

US Confirms Its First Omicron Case

The U.S. recorded its first confirmed case of the omicron variant Wednesday, in a vaccinated traveler who returned to California after a trip to South Africa, as scientists around the world race to establish whether the new, mutant version of the coronavirus is more dangerous than previous ones.

The infected person was identified as a traveler who had returned from South Africa on Nov. 22, developed mild symptoms and tested positive Monday.

Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco obtained a sample from the patient Tuesday evening and worked feverishly overnight to assemble the genetic sequence.

The person, who received the two doses of the Moderna shot but had not been vaccinated long enough to receive a booster shot, is improving and agreed to remain in quarantine, California officials said.

All the individual's close contacts have been reached and have tested negative, officials said.

The patient was identified only as being between 18 and 49.

Genomic sequencing on the patient's virus from UCSF was confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It is not known precisely where or when the variant first emerged, though it is clear it was circulating in Europe several days before South Africa sounded the alarm.

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