



Shawnee County Health Department

**Shawnee County Health Department**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **MEDIA RELEASE**

#### **First Confirmed Case of Omicron Variant in Shawnee County**

**Topeka, Kan.** – The Shawnee County Health Department was notified today of the first confirmed case of the Omicron variant in a Shawnee County resident by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE).

“We have been expecting and preparing for this notification of Omicron in our community,” said Dr. Erin Locke, Shawnee County Health Officer. “The Omicron variant is much more contagious than previous variants, even Delta, and has the capacity to evade some of our hard-won immunity. It will spread more easily in the home and at work, in schools and at community events. Fortunately, the familiar mitigation measures will work against this respiratory virus, but we must be vigilant. It is extremely important to get vaccinated with a booster, wear a mask, get tested, maintain physical distance and stay home when sick.”

KDHE and the SCHD are urging Kansans to use the following tools to protect themselves against COVID-19 and the omicron variant:

- **Get vaccinated and boosted.** Vaccines remain the best tool to protect people from COVID-19, slow transmission and reduce the likelihood of new variants emerging. The three authorized COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing serious illness, hospitalizations, and death. Scientists expect the vaccines to prevent serious illness, hospitalizations, and death in people infected with the Omicron variant. COVID-19 vaccines are now authorized for people ages 5 and over. The COVID-19 booster shots are authorized for all individuals ages 16 and over. To find a vaccine near you, visit [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov).
- **Wear a mask.** Masks offer protection against all variants. It is recommended that people wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor settings in Kansas, where COVID-19 transmission remains high, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Get tested.** If you are sick or have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, it is recommended that you get tested for COVID-19. COVID-19 tests are available across Kansas. Go to [www.KnowBeforeYouGoKS.com](http://www.KnowBeforeYouGoKS.com) to find a free testing location near you. At-home tests are available for purchase at grocery stores and pharmacies. These can be used at home, work or anywhere and can provide rapid results. If a positive result is received through an at-home test, individuals should follow up with a health care provider about a confirmation test.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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- **Social distance.** When in public settings, stay at least 6 feet from other people, especially if you are at higher risk of getting sick.

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*Shawnee County Health Department is committed to working in partnership with our community to promote and protect the optimal health of all people by bridging gaps to eliminate health inequities, respecting the diversity of our community, through adaptive and innovative processes.*

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