

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: CDC Says New Omicron Variant Makes Up One Quarter of Cases Nationwide**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the BA.2 sub-lineage of the Omicron variant now makes up nearly a quarter of new COVID-19 infections nationwide.

Since January, Omicron has made up virtually all new infections in the U.S. Like in many countries abroad, most cases in the U.S. had been caused by a sub-lineage of Omicron known as BA.1. But while both BA.1 and BA.2 can be traced back to some of the earliest samples gathered of Omicron, BA.2 has only recently begun to climb in prevalence. BA.2's prevalence is the highest in the Northeast, according to the CDC's "Nowcast" estimates. In the region spanning New York and New Jersey, the CDC estimates 39.0% of circulating viruses are BA.2. In New England, prevalence of BA.2 is at 38.6%.

The new estimates come as the sub-lineage has raised concerns abroad, where it has grown to dominate cases reported worldwide — including in countries that are now facing a renewed surge of infections just as they had moved to lift many of their pandemic restrictions. In China, authorities have moved to reimpose strict lockdowns to curb BA.2 outbreaks in several cities. However, the increase in BA.2's proportion in the U.S. comes as the CDC has continued to track a nationwide slowdown in the pace of new COVID-19 hospitalizations and cases. Those trends appear to hold true even in the regions with the highest share of BA.2 cases, though early-warning data gathered by the agency from wastewater samples does suggest some communities might soon see an uptick.

The CDC maintains although the proportion of infections with BA.2 is increasing in the U.S., COVID-19 cases are now declining, so it is likely that absolute numbers of BA.2 infections are not increasing as quickly as they might seem from just looking at the proportion that are BA.2. A key difference between BA.1 and BA.2 had enabled some researchers to quickly differentiate these sub-lineages.

Preliminary research overseas, including from Qatar and Denmark, suggest that BA.2 is unlikely to cause many reinfections of people who survived a case of BA.1 earlier in the Omicron wave. Early findings out of South Africa and the United Kingdom also suggest the BA.2 variant appears to pose about the same risk of severe disease or evading the protection of vaccines, compared to BA.1. Citing these similarities, the World Health Organization said late last month that it would continue to group both BA.1 and BA.2 together as a single variant of concern.

Tracking the spread of BA.2 is important in part because it could significantly change some of the options doctors have to treat the most vulnerable COVID-19 patients. The US Department of Health and Human Services has put tracking BA.2 as a top priority.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about the CDC please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on [www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition](https://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition) or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the COVID-19 Epidemic and its correlation to increased mental illness, alcohol and substance use in youth and adults and resources to cope please visit [www.safeglencove.org](http://www.safeglencove.org).