

California faces rising anxiety about Covid spread

SAN FRANCISCO — California is approaching another summer amid growing anxiety over COVID-19 as outbreaks increase and officials try to determine when this new wave will crest.

Although case rates are climbing, experts note they are doing so at a more modest pace than the first Omicron surge, which began spiking in December. California's per capita COVID-19 hospitalization rate is also lower than some states on the East Coast. But with Memorial Day, graduations, proms and other seasonal events on the horizon, officials are **concerned about the upward trend worsening**.

"We are seeing more activity, and so it is time to break out your mask and break out your tests and just be a bit more cautious than maybe you were a month ago," said Dr. Sara Cody, public health director and health officer for Santa Clara County. *"Even if you got Omicron during the Omicron surge, you can still get COVID again, unfortunately."*

'Significant uptick' in California coronavirus outbreaks brings new warnings. California is reporting about 8,000 daily coronavirus cases in the last week, up 18% over the previous week's tally of 6,800 cases a day. The statewide test positivity rate has climbed to 4%; a week ago it was 3%.

Coronavirus-positive hospitalizations also have started to tick upward, but the number of patients needing intensive care has remained relatively stable, hovering near record lows for the pandemic. Health officials across the state widely agree that it's prudent to take precautions when coronavirus transmission is high — **including wearing masks in indoor public spaces**, being up-to-date on vaccinations and boosters, and gathering outdoors when possible or increasing ventilation when meeting indoors.

The San Francisco Bay Area has California's **highest coronavirus case rate** — nearly double that of Southern California — and coronavirus levels in sewage for much of Silicon Valley **have more than doubled over the last two weeks**. Coronavirus levels **in wastewater** also are increasing in Yolo County, home to UC Davis, said Dr. Alexander T. Yu.

Coronavirus gains in California spark new concerns

The Bay Area now has a rate of 226 weekly coronavirus cases for every 100,000 residents, up 14% over the prior week. The state as a whole was reporting 144 cases a week for every 100,000 residents, and Southern California's rate was 134. **A rate of 100 or higher is considered a high rate of transmission**,

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Santa Clara County is also beginning to **see a rise among coronavirus-positive hospitalizations. On April 26, there were 80; two weeks later, there were 121**. And health experts are beginning to warn that **Omicron survivors can get reinfected**. Experts had initially thought that surviving the first Omicron variant, BA.1, likely provided protection against subvariant BA.2. But that **may not be true for the latest ascendant Omicron subvariant, BA.2.12.1**.

Cody urged people to take precautions. You have **to mask indoors, test when necessary**, try to take things outside if you can," she said.

California state epidemiologist Dr. Erica Pan reiterated that Omicron can still be dangerous. While much has been said about Omicron being less likely to cause severe illness, **its extraordinarily contagiousness means a lot more people can be simultaneously infected, and more people died.**

California coronavirus cases rising. Is a new wave coming soon?

California has benefited from the **widespread availability of anti-COVID drugs**. **Newly infected people can get prescriptions from health providers and "Test to Treat" sites at select pharmacies.**

"Paxlovid, we have plenty of supply, and then molnupiravir as well," Pan said, referring to the two drugs that can be taken orally. "There is no shortage anymore." Oral anti-COVID medications **must be taken within five days of the first COVID-19 symptoms**. Of the two, **Paxlovid is considered more effective**.