Indigenous Services Canada | Services aux Autochtones Canada

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ATTN: First Nations community members across Saskatchewan – Omicron Variant

Most viruses go through mutations when it spreads in a population. Some mutations have no effect, while others are advantageous for the virus – making them more contagious and easier to spread within a population. COVID-19 has spawned several Variants of Concern (VOC), such as the Delta variant which is the most dominant variant worldwide and has fuelled the fourth wave in Canada, including in Saskatchewan.

Omicron, a new VOC, was designated on November 26, 2021 by the World Health Organization. Early evidence is showing that Omicron may have higher transmissibility compared to other VOC, including Delta. This VOC has multiple mutations in the spike proteins, which is the same area that our vaccines currently target. Studies are underway to understand what impact the Omicron variant has on vaccine effectiveness and on the severity and transmissibility of disease.

All variants designated as a VOC are more contagious and more dangerous. The best way to protect yourself and to slow the spread and introduction of new variants is to continue following public health protocols and get everyone eligible fully vaccinated as soon as possible.

Wearing a well-fit, non-medical mask (and a medical mask for high risk groups), physical distancing, good hand hygiene and avoiding non-essential travel are all measures that provide layers of protection for you, your family and your community. With the holidays coming up, keep gatherings small and with those that are fully vaccinated. Stay home if you do not feel well and get tested if you develop any symptoms. All COVID-19 tests can detect known variants. We will work with your nursing staff to implement any changes to public health measures in response to Omicron variant.

There is vaccine ready and available for everyone 5 years of age and older. Everyone eligible needs to get fully vaccinated as soon as possible, including if you are eligible for a booster dose. COVID-19 vaccines protect against Delta and other known variants. They help your body's immune system to prevent illness and they reduce the risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death due to COVID-19.

More questions about vaccines and your health? Before you turn to friends (or Facebook), have a one-on-one conversation with your community health nurse, doctor or pharmacist or visit saskatchewan.ca/covid19-vaccine or canada.ca/covidvaccines.

Respectfully,

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