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PERSONAL HEALTH DIVISION

For Immediate Release

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BA.2 variant takes hold in US *Despite low hospitalizations, deaths, safety measures recommended*

The Omicron BA.2 variant is taking hold across the United States, yet public health officials are stating that warming weather and built-in immunity may lessen its impact on the general population.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Omicron BA.2 variant accounted for 72.2% of the cases in the United States as of April 2. Although case trends are rising slightly, hospitalizations and deaths are trending downward, [according to data on the CDC website](#). The BA.2 appears to spread more easily than the Omicron variant detected earlier, though the severity of cases is less – potentially due to a high level of immunity in the population from vaccines, boosters, and previous infections.

“Although hospitalizations and deaths are not as severe with this variant at this time, residents are urged to take mitigation measures based on their personal choice and risk factors,” said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer with the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department.

The CDC has a [COVID-19 Community Level tool](#) to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest data. Levels can be low, medium, or high and are determined by looking at hospital beds being used, hospital admissions, and the total number of new COVID-19 cases in an area.

As of Monday, the community level in Benzie and Leelanau counties was “low,” according to the CDC data. The low level still means residents should stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if they have symptoms.

Being vaccinated and receiving at least one booster shot (if eligible) is the best prevention against COVID-19, Peacock said. The health department offers [convenient COVID-19 vaccination clinics](#) across its two-county region. If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or have any symptoms, the health department offers free and convenient tests. To find a testing site near you, visit www.bldhd.org.

In addition, people may choose to mask at any time. People with [symptoms, a positive test, or exposure](#) to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. Those who are immunocompromised or those who live with someone with risk factors may also choose to wear a mask.

Stay up to date on the latest information in the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department jurisdiction by [liking and following our Facebook page](#) and visiting our [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). To locate a testing facility, visit the [Michigan COVID-19 Test Finder website](#). To track the risk levels of COVID-19 pandemic indicators, visit the [MI Safe Start Map website](#). For more information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine, visit the [MDHHS vaccine website](#) or the [CDC vaccine website](#). Anyone with questions about COVID-19, testing, or vaccines can call the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department COVID line at 231-882-2197.

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