



PR#596

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Ministry of Health & Wellness Warns of Omicron Variant of COVID-19**

*Belmopan. December 30, 2021. 11:00 a.m.*

The Ministry of Health & Wellness informs the public that the pattern of the COVID-19 cases has changed. Currently, the majority of cases present upper airway symptoms such as nasal congestion, runny nose and sore throat associated with a mild fever and/or muscle aches and pains. The cases are increasing exponentially with a leap in the positivity rate from 2.5 to 16 in a very short period of time. While genomic sequencing is pending, epidemiologically, it appears to be the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

Although cases are appearing to be mild when compared to the Delta variant, the rapid rise in cases in the country remains a significant concern and a threat to the health system. It is imperative that the public is aware that, clinically, the Omicron virus is in the country and therefore must strengthen public health and social measures at home and workplaces.

The ministry urges the public to continue to follow strict public health and social measures by wearing a properly fitted face mask at all times in public, washing and sanitizing hands regularly, maintaining proper physical distance and avoiding crowds and enclosed areas. The public is reminded that gathering and socializing in large groups are prohibited and that bars and nightclubs remain closed.

The COVID-19 vaccines, including booster doses, remain very effective at preventing severe symptoms of this disease and death. Boosters are being offered three months after the second dose of the two-dose vaccines and two months after the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen single-dose vaccine. Please speak to the ministry staff at any of the vaccine sites for more information.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness implores the public to work together to protect the vulnerable population, ensure a safe reopening of schools and stop the spread of COVID-19.

**Ends**