



BA.2 subvariant isn't more dangerous - it's 'just more contagious,' says doctor

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WASHINGTON (TND) — Over the past two weeks, cases of BA.2, a new subvariant of omicron, have doubled. According to Dr. Jeffrey Singer, BA.2 is a “cousin” of the BA.1 subvariant of omicron which surged this past winter.

“They’re pretty much the same. The BA.2 isn’t any more dangerous, doesn’t make you any sicker than the BA.1,” said Singer to The National Desk’s Jan Jeffcoat. “It’s just more contagious, so it’s sort of outcompeting the BA.1.”

The BA.2 subvariant will continue to dominate and “crowd out” the BA.1 variant, according to Singer.

“We can expect, because this is so contagious, we’re going to see cases going up; they’re already beginning to go up here,” said Singer.

According to Singer, the U.S. typically lags behind case trends in the U.K and Europe.

“Cases did go up there but that didn’t make them cut back on their relaxation of restrictions, despite the cases going up,” said Singer. “I think we should stop focusing on cases and just focus on how many people are sick enough to go to the hospital. Because basically, this is just going to become a recurring cold.”

Singer said while the U.S. will see more cases of BA.2 and other future subvariants, “as long as the variants stay this mild,” it’s not a cause for concern.

“As it continues to infect those who have not yet developed some degree of immunity or people who already had COVID or had the vaccination, with each infection, the immunity we have kind of battles it off,” said Singer. “As long as some mutation doesn’t occur that’s more dangerous, more deadly than the omicron, we can expect that it’s just going to become a nuisance like the colds that we get.”

Both Pfizer and Moderna have asked the Food and Drug Administration to authorize another booster dose. Pfizer asked the FDA to authorize a dose for those 65 and older, while Moderna asked for authorization for everyone 18 and older. But Singer said the argument for a fourth shot is “still controversial.”

“As far as we know, if you're, you know, over 65 and immunocompromised, you might not have responded to the previous three doses as well as a healthy person. So there is an argument that particularly immunocompromised people might benefit from a fourth dose,” said Singer. “But generally speaking, it looks like the immunity conferred by the three known regimen is pretty solid.”