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CDC Investigating 92 Cruise Ships With Reported Covid-19 Cases

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is monitoring 92 cruise ships with reported cases of Covid-19 on board, as Omicron — the highly transmissible but drastically less severe variant of Covid-19 — spreads worldwide.

The CDC, which [posted the list on its website](#) Tuesday and continues to add ships as more cases are reported, investigates a ship if cases account for 0.10 percent of passengers in the past seven days, or if one or more crew members test positive for the virus.

Part of the reason for the investigation is to ensure that cruise ships have adequate medical resources to address an outbreak. "When a cruise ship operating under the Conditional Sailing order notifies CDC of suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19 on board, CDC determines whether an

investigation is needed, based on a predetermined investigation threshold. This investigation threshold gives CDC and the cruise industry the ability to work closely together to protect the health and safety of those on board and in communities," the CDC said.

Ship color status

Ship color status is determined using surveillance data from the previous 7 days—regardless of voyage dates— and CDC investigation findings, the CDC said.

- Green status means the ship has no reports of cases of Covid-19 or Covid-19-like illness.
- Orange status means the ship has reported cases of Covid-19 but is below the [threshold for CDC investigation](#).
- Yellow status means the ship has met the threshold for CDC investigation, which includes one of the following criteria:
 - at or above the investigation threshold for crew Covid-19 cases,
 - at or above the investigation threshold for passenger Covid-19 cases; or
 - state or local health department notified CDC of passenger Covid-19 cases occurring within 5 days of disembarkation.
- Red status means the ship is at or above the CDC investigation threshold for passenger and crew Covid-19 cases. Based on CDC's investigation, additional public health precautions, such as returning to port immediately or delaying the next voyage, will be taken to help ensure the health and safety of onboard travelers or newly arriving travelers.
- Gray status means CDC has not reviewed or confirmed the cruise ship operator's health and safety protocols. This status only applies to cruise ships arriving in, located within, or departing from a port in Florida that chose to not follow the CSO on a voluntary basis.

Cruise ships resumed voyages in June after being grounded for more than a year as a result of the pandemic. Cruise travelers are considered high risk by the CDC because the virus spreads easily among people in close proximity. To help mitigate spread, many cruise operators require most guests to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

A Royal Caribbean cruise ship with 6,091 passengers and crew that ended its Caribbean voyage on Dec. 18, [reported](#) that 48 people aboard the ship for the seven-day cruise tested positive for Covid-19. The destinations visited by the ship, Symphony of the Seas which is the world's biggest cruise ship, were St. Maarten, St. Thomas and Perfect Day at CocoCay (Royal Caribbean's private island), Royal Caribbean said in a statement provided to the media.

Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion said Monday it would be difficult to pin the rise in cases on the cruise ship. And Governor Bryan expressed strong support for the industry. "I'll say it publicly, the cruise ships have been shutdown for a year and a half; they've taken a tremendous hit to their business. They're one of our crucial tourism partners, and I just want to make sure that we give them a fair shake," Mr. Bryan said Monday. "They're under considerable pressure as it is with this new Omicron variant and I'm praying for them and hoping that they can get their situation

under control so they don't have to stop sailing again."

The Omicron variant is proving to cause drastically less severe illness than other strains before it, including Delta. The variant's less severe nature has been backed up by three major studies so far, one from [South Africa where the strain was first detected in late November, another by Scotland](#), and a third [from the United Kingdom](#). The South African study, published online by researchers at South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases, found people infected with Omicron were 70% to 80% less likely to need hospital treatment than people infected with earlier variants, including Delta, according to the Wall Street Journal.

In Scotland, 83.6% of people aged 12 and over have received two doses of vaccine, and 56.6% have received a third shot, WSJ said.

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