COVID Forecast 1A & 1B AB 12/22/2021(WedPM & ThursAM)

As the omicron variant spreads throughout the state, a new COVID-19 forecast report predicts Arkansas will have a steady rise in cases, deaths, and hospitalizations. The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health released a report that projects new daily COVID-19 cases will increase from 766 to 815 by next week. The surge is expected to forcibly hit the state around the second to third week in January. Mark Williams, dean of UAMS' College of Public Health, says this report shows how contagious the new variant is.

News11 0:21 "...Inquired through vaccination."

While it's possible the variant has a high chance of evading vaccine-induced antibodies, Williams stressed how important it is for people to become fully vaccinated. He says only 14 percent of Arkansans have received their booster shot.

News12 0:25 "...Is the takeaway."

Williams recommends wearing masks again in public to reduce the spread of the virus. The report predicts Arkansans between ages 35 and 59 will have the highest number of COVID-19 diagnoses, with cumulative cases increasing by more than four-thousand two days after Christmas.

COVID Forecast 2A & 2B AB 12/22/2021(WedPM & ThursAM)

State health officials are warning Arkansans that the omicron variant is predicted to spread quickly in the following weeks. That's according to an updated COVID-19 forecast report from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health. The projections reveal hospitalizations and new daily COVID-19 cases will steadily increase, with five deaths being reported on an average each day in the next two weeks. Mark Williams is the dean of UAMS' College of Public Health. He says omicron is unlike any other variant.

News13 0:20 "...It is spreading."

While Williams says Arkansas hospitals have enough supplies and ventilators, a big concern is having scarce staff and hospital space when the surge hits.

News14 0:28 "...People get vaccinated."

Williams says the variant will affect more children compared to last winter. According to the report, the highest relative growth in COVID-19 cases will be in people aged 17 and younger. Cases are expected to increase by nearly 3% in this age group, adding more than 25-hundred cumulative cases.