

# *U.S. warns of Omicron blizzard*

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Washington, December 31 (RHC)-- U.S. health experts have urged Americans to prepare for severe disruptions in the coming weeks as the rising wave of COVID-19 cases led by the Omicron variant threatened hospitals, schools and other sectors impacting their daily lives.

“The next month is going to be a viral blizzard,” Dr Michael Osterholm, an infectious disease expert at the University of Minnesota, told MSNBC news channel. “All of society is going to be pressured by this.”

The warning came as the U.S. reached a record high in COVID-19 cases for the second day in a row based on the seven-day average, with more than 290,000 new infections reported each day, a Reuters news tally showed. The state of Hawaii set an all-time record for new coronavirus cases on Thursday of nearly 3,500.

In related news, pediatric COVID hospitalizations have hit a record-high in the United States, as children are increasingly swept up in Omicron's lightning spread.

While experts are concerned, and stress the need to step up vaccination among children, early indications suggest that the new variant's rate of severe disease could in fact be lower, and its extreme contagiousness is behind the rapid rise.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, almost 199,000 children were reported infected with COVID-19 in the week ending December 23rd, the last week for which data is currently available, and a 50 percent rise on figures earlier in the month.

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