

U.S. to lift travel restrictions for Southern African countries

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(HealthDay News)—Starting Dec. 31, the United States will lift travel

restrictions from eight countries in Southern Africa.

The restrictions were first announced in late November in response to concerns about omicron, the new highly contagious variant of COVID-19. Omicron was spotted first in Southern Africa.

The restrictions had been directed at travel from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique, and Malawi, *CBS News* reported. American citizens or lawful permanent residents were not limited by the restrictions but still needed to have a negative test prior to traveling.

"On Dec. 31, @POTUS will lift the temporary [travel restrictions](#) on Southern Africa countries. This decision was recommended by @CDCgov," White House spokesman Kevin Munoz said on Twitter. "The restrictions gave us time to understand omicron and we know our existing vaccines work against omicron, [especially] boosted."

While omicron has far more mutations than previously detected variants, early data from South Africa and the United Kingdom suggest patients face a lower risk for hospitalization with this particular variant. It may be that omicron is milder or it could be that more people have some immunity from prior infections or vaccination, *CBS News* reported.

Omicron has also spread rapidly through the United States and Europe. Most COVID-19 cases in the United States are now due to this variant.

More information: [CBS News Article](#)

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