Anthony Fauci Gets COVID-19 Despite Precautions

The nation's top pandemic adviser joins a growing number of people catching the coronavirus during the omicron wave.

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Anthony Fauci, MD, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the nation's top medical adviser on COVID-19 during both the Trump and Biden administrations, has now caught the coronavirus himself, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced on June 15 .

Fauci, 81, is fully vaccinated and has received two boosters. He tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 (the coronavirus that causes COVID-19) on a rapid antigen test, according to the announcement. He is currently experiencing mild symptoms, and he will isolate and continue to work from home. He has not recently been in close contact with President Joe Biden or other senior government officials.

"Dr. Fauci will follow the COVID-19 guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and medical advice from his physician and return to the NIH when he tests negative," the announcement states. The announcement did not reveal whether he is taking Paxlovid (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir), an antiviral pill that reduces the odds of severe illness in people with mild to moderate symptoms who are at high risk for disease progression. However, CNN reported that he is being treated with the antiviral.

Fauci is the latest in a long line of prominent government officials and celebrities who have come down with COVID despite being fully vaccinated and taking precautions. Fauci, who has often appeared double-masked or wearing an N95, skipped the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in April because of his individual assessment of personal risk.

While wearing high-quality masks and taking other precautions enabled many people to escape infection with earlier coronavirus variants during 2020 and 2021, that was before the omicron wave. SARS-CoV-2 omicron variants are better at evading immunity from vaccination or prior infection, leading to higher breakthrough and reinfection rates. However, prior immunity does still offer protection against COVID hospitalization and death.

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