

# *European health authorities say COVID-19 cases might go up in winter*

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Brussels, November 28 (RHC)-- Looking ahead to winter, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has urged Europe to prepare for a possible new wave of COVID-19. According to the head of EMA's Biological Threats to Health and Vaccines Strategy, Marco Cavaleri, the immunity produced by vaccines and natural infections has meant that the continent has not experienced an increase in cases in recent weeks.

During a virtual press conference, Cavaleri said that the winter months could reverse that scenario. "This virus maintains an accelerated pace in its evolution and new omicron subvariants, such as BQ.1.1 and its descendants, are on the rise and replacing BA.5," the official warned.

In this regard, Cavaleri said these subvariants are more prone to evade immunity, mainly BQ.1.1, which is not neutralized by currently available monoclonal antibodies. The official called for booster vaccination against COVID-19, warning that the European average rate is only 29 percent in people over 60 years old

or with chronic health conditions.

"The risk of severe COVID-19 increases exponentially with age above 60 years. The older you get, the greater the risk, and vaccines can be life-saving." To avoid an increase in hospitalizations in the coming months, Cavaleri called for reinforced efforts to increase immunization of at-risk groups.

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