

Succumbed

Category: Omicron

written by Julie A. Dickson | February 28, 2022

It started with a raging sore throat in the middle of the night. I rarely wake once I fall asleep, but on that particular night, I opened my eyes at 1:00 a.m. and it hurt badly to swallow my own saliva. I rolled over, took a dose of ibuprofen with water, and returned to sleep.

Morning arrived, and a pounding headache was added to my fiery throat. I stumbled to the kitchen to make a cup of tea and sat there feeling dazed, wondering what was going on. I was thrice vaccinated, so it couldn't be ... could it? Yet as the morning marched on, I became more and more suspicious. My first test was with a thermometer—but I had no elevated fever at all. I also had no congestion and no other symptoms, aside from the raw throat and throbbing head.

I held the box in my hand for quite a while, before I finally opened the flap and removed the instruction sheet for the COVID-19 test I had obtained, just in case. The result: POSITIVE. What?!

I always wore a mask to the grocery store and to my clients' homes. I had refrained from eating in restaurants for so long that my own cooking had become second nature again. How could I have been exposed? How could I be positive?

I called in sick to work, notified my family and close friends, and then hunkered down. I had succumbed to Omicron, even though I was a germaphobe under normal circumstances, even though I always opened doors with my elbow, even though I washed my hands and sanitized regularly, even though I'd been careful about masking. I had avoided illness for 19 months—through COVID's initial onset and through the Delta surge, only to contract Omicron without a clue as to where I had been exposed.

I rested and felt fortunate that my symptoms abated after only a few days. I relaxed when I tested negative on day eight, returning cautiously to work and my life. Now, when I hear people bragging that they are being very careful, I respond that I was, too, but still succumbed.

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