

August 9, 2022

To the people of Ehime,

Announcement of Strengthened Measures in Ehime Prefecture for the BA.5 Subvariant of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The number of new cases in Ehime Prefecture have increased sharply since mid-July, in part due to the more infectious Omicron subvariant, BA.5, gradually replacing the previous strain. Yesterday, there was an all-time record of 2,841 cases.

Along with this unprecedented spike, hospitalizations have also increased and the bed occupancy rate has now exceeded past 50%. As of today, it is at 61.3%, indicating that healthcare providers are dangerously overwhelmed. We are in a situation where we must prioritize our limited medical resources to older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions who are at a higher risk of severe illness, and those who may need the early treatment.

Furthermore, there is concern that the infection will spread further as BA.5 becomes the new dominant strain, especially with the increased exposure due to people traveling across prefectural borders to attend summer events and return home for Obon.

Under these severe circumstances, we are announcing the “Strengthened Measures in Ehime Prefecture for the BA.5 Subvariant” to protect individuals at higher risk of severe illness by aiming to prevent healthcare shortages and the further spread of infection. The measures will be enforced starting today until Wednesday, August 31, 2022.

This announcement is intended to strengthen measures to control the spread caused by BA.5 during the current “Special Alert Period.” We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in the following efforts to prevent further healthcare shortages.

Seeking Appropriate Medical Care

- If your symptoms are mild, do not go see a healthcare provider on off-days or at night. Please only go during the day on a weekday if you are concerned about your condition.
- If you are self-isolating at home and your symptoms worsen, please contact the Medical Consultation Center.

- Call an ambulance in an emergency.

Notification System for Asymptomatic Persons (Starting August 10)

- If you are asymptomatic, even if you tested positive, please do not go see a healthcare provider. Instead, use the medical treatment notification system to learn how to recuperate at home.
(Reply via email with your “Notification Certificate” that you can submit to your workplace, etc.)

Prioritizing Initial Contact for High-Risk Individuals*

(Initial Contact, a.k.a. “First Touch”: After testing positive, the Health Center contacts the individual by the next day and meets with them in-person to ask about their condition.)

*High-Risk Individuals:

- Those who are older than 65 years old, have multiple risk factors for severe illness, and/or are pregnant
- Those requested by their healthcare provider

For individuals NOT at risk of severe illness, you will receive a text message informing you of the precautions to take while recuperating. You will not need an epidemiological investigation or other health examination. This procedure will be switched from health centers that are ready.

If you have tested positive and have not received a text message after 3 days, please contact your local health center.

Please be diligent in following the requests made in this **“Strengthened Measures in Ehime Prefecture for the BA.5 Subvariant” announcement and continue to practice preventive measures**, especially keeping in mind our health center staff and medical workers who are working hard to protect us on the front lines.

The following is a summary of our main requests:

Stricter Dining Restrictions (2 new rules added)

- If you plan to dine out with friends or relatives you do not see on a regular basis who have returned home for summer vacation, please be extra cautious and get tested beforehand.
- Do not dine out if a positive case was confirmed in your workplace or other immediate surrounding, even if contact with the individual was brief.

Stricter Measures on Summer Events (Festivals, Fireworks, etc.)

- Be diligent in practicing preventive measures when attending events.

Other Requests

- Cooperate in getting the appropriate medical examinations.
- Advocate for vaccines (vaccinating together with your child, vaccinating without an appointment, after-hours vaccination, etc.)
- Be diligent in practicing preventive measures (especially be aware to follow stricter restrictions for dining out, events, and community sports/cultural activities)
- Extensive preventive measures for older adults
 - Older adults and others at a higher risk of severe illness, as well as people living with those individuals, should be cautious to reduce the risk of infection by following preventive measures such as avoiding crowded places.
 - Confirm negative test result ahead of time if you are going home to meet with elderly relatives.
- Keep at least 3 days' worth of water, food, over-the-counter medicines, and other necessities on top of the recommended amount needed to prepare for a disaster.

This concludes our requests to you. As we have done many times in the past with the “All Ehime” campaign, **we ask for everyone to come together to overcome this seventh wave.**

Tokihiro NAKAMURA
Governor of Ehime Prefecture