

To the people of Ehime,

### **Transitioning to an Infection Alert Period for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to everyone for your continued cooperation in preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

On January 12, the alert level in Ehime was raised to a “Special Infection Alert Period” due to the spread of the Omicron variant. Since then, restrictions on travel, dining, and other activities have been imposed for over two months.

During this time, while it did fluctuate constantly, **the number of cases in Ehime remained considerably low compared to other prefectures** thanks to everyone’s cooperation. **Ehime even had the lowest spike in cases relative to its population in Japan.**

Although the situation continues to change, **positive cases and hospitalizations of adults over the age of 70 and thus are at a high risk of serious illness has decreased significantly**, lessening the burden on healthcare providers.

As of the end of March, **70% of older adults in Matsuyama and over 80% throughout the prefecture have received their vaccine booster (3rd dose)**. Therefore, even if the number of cases continues to fluctuate, **the possibility of a sharp increase in cases or hospitalizations of adults over the age of 70 should be low**, and is unlikely to lead to a sudden spike that will severely burden healthcare providers. In addition, the vaccine booster rollout for those younger than 65 is progressing gradually, and will surely be effective for many.

Based on this, **we will be transitioning to an “Infection Alert Period” starting Friday, April 1.**

However, **it is necessary to continue to keep in mind the usual precautions**, as medical professionals have commented that **the burden on nurses and other healthcare staff continues to increase due to the prolonged pandemic**. Some experts have also pointed out that **there is a possibility the new Omicron subvariant, BA.2, has played a role in the increased rate of cases.**

This transition **does not mean it is okay to loosen restrictions**, instead:

- **Please continue to practice preventive measures.**
- **Please especially keep in mind dining rules and regulations.**
- **Please be aware of the impact of spreading the infection (i.e. the burden on various businesses and healthcare providers).**

**We will gradually resume socioeconomic activities** while keeping in mind the above precautions. **If they are not properly followed and the situation becomes so severe it puts people's lives at risk or the burden on healthcare providers increases suddenly, we will have no choice but enforce strict measures again. It is important to keep in mind the "new normal" while resuming daily routines.**

Therefore, we ask everyone to respect the following **precautions and rules**:

Travel Outside the Prefecture

- **No restriction enforced, but please be cautious when traveling out of the prefecture.**

Travel Within the Prefecture

- **Avoid going to crowded places with poor ventilation or other high-risk areas.**

Dining Out

- **Avoid large groups and long hours; and dining at certified restaurants is recommended.**
- **Anyone who has engaged in high-risk activities within the past week or is not feeling well should not attend or be allowed to attend gatherings (always check with the organizer or other parties involved).**
- **Be proactive and make use of free testing sites.**

For those who are eligible, **please make an appointment for the vaccine booster (3rd dose) as soon as possible.**

With this transition, **we will resume the "New Mican Discount" for accommodations within Ehime on April 11, with applications being accepted starting April 8, and also proceed with large-scale events such as "Cycling Shimanami 2022" (applications open April 18), and "Ehime Nanyo Kizuna Expo" (beginning April 24)** while continuing to closely monitor the situation.

Tokihiro NAKAMURA  
Governor of Ehime Prefecture