

December 5, 2022

To the people of Ehime,

Raising the Alert Level to a “Special Alert Period” for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

The number of daily cases in Ehime Prefecture rose above 1,500 last Monday, November 28. Cases are increasing in all regions, especially in Matsuyama City and its surrounding municipalities due to the large population.

Furthermore, the bed occupancy rate has been increasing since late October, reaching around 50% at the end of November, and the number of hospitalized patients over the age of 70 is nearing the number it was at during the height of the seventh wave.

There is growing concern that cases may rise even further given that the infection is continuing to spread in northern Japan, where seasons change earlier, and that cases in the past years tend to spike particularly around New Years. Moreover, this winter will be the first time there will also be a simultaneous outbreak of seasonal influenza, which had not yet been a concern for the past two years.

As winter approaches and the possibility of cases increasing continues, **we have decided to raise the alert level to a “Special Alert Period” starting today.**

The following measures will be taken to improve our current healthcare system and testing facilities in preparation for the eighth wave:

- Ensure outpatient care for those with symptoms during the holiday season (support for participating medical institutions is also under consideration).
- Increase routine testing for personnel in all municipalities (priority given to staff working in senior care facilities).

Please be aware that there is an increased risk of infection throughout the prefecture. We ask for your continued understanding and cooperation in practicing thorough preventive measures, and comply with the following requests:

Call to Action

① Preventive Measures

- Ventilate regularly, even if heating is in use.
- If you show symptoms, refrain from going out, going to work, or attending school.
- If you do not feel well, use a self-test kit.

When dining out, follow restrictions and avoid long hours.

- Regardless of the number of people or the size of the restaurant, make sure to practice preventive measures such as:
 - Checking physical condition thoroughly.
 - Social distancing and ventilating regularly.
 - Keeping your voice down and behaving appropriately.
 - Getting tested beforehand at a free testing center.

② Vaccination

- Get the Omicron vaccine as soon as possible.
- * Individuals eligible for the vaccine, regardless of age, should be vaccinated by the end of the year at the latest.
- * Vaccine effectiveness declines over time. Please get vaccinated even if you have tested positive in the past.

③ Seeking Medical Care

- If you are not at risk of severe illness and/or your symptoms are mild, please try to see a doctor only during the day on weekdays. This is to ensure medical care access for those at high risk, such as older adults and children. Self-test kits are also available.
- Check reports of seasonal influenza released every Friday.
- Keep on hand self-test kits, over-the-counter medication such as antipyretic analgesics, and at least three days' worth of water, food, and other necessities.

It is important to practice basic preventive measures to continue living in this “new normal” without causing a public health crisis. We ask everyone to come together to cooperate in reassessing daily habits and avoiding high risk activities in both school/work and private life.

Tokihiro NAKAMURA
Governor of Ehime Prefecture