

December 15, 2022

To the people of Ehime,

Announcement Regarding a Medical Shortage Alert Due to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Ehime Prefecture raised our alert level to a “Special Alert Period” on December 5, enhancing the current healthcare system and testing facilities and calling on everyone to practice preventive measures to avoid a potential public health crisis.

However, the number of cases in Ehime has since surged past the national average due to the onslaught of the eighth wave, with more than 3,000 cases confirmed on Monday, December 12.

Furthermore, there are no signs that the medical burden will be lessened any time soon, as the bed occupancy rate has remained at around 50% since late November and may be on the rise, and the number of inpatients aged 70 and over, who make up more than 80% of hospitalized individuals, continues to approach the level it was during the seventh wave. There is also growing concern that the infection will spread further over New Years due to the simultaneous outbreak of seasonal influenza this winter, increasing the strain on medical institutions even more.

For this reason, **we have decided to release an announcement today warning everyone about a medical shortage.** The following initiatives will be taken to prevent a potential public health crisis:

- An enhancement of the Ehime Positive Results Registry is under consideration.
- Outpatient care for those with symptoms during the holiday season will be increased.
- Free testing centers will be expanded upon and available for an extended period of time.
 - Free testing for individuals returning to the prefecture will be available from December 24, 2022 to January 12, 2023.
 - Free testing for asymptomatic individuals will be extended until the end of January 2023.
- The number of facilities that are required to routinely test staff members will be increased.
 - Facilities specializing in care for people with disabilities, elementary schools, nursery schools, and kindergartens will all be included in addition to senior care facilities.

We ask everyone to cooperate with the following:

Call to Action

- Most individuals of working age who do not have underlying medical conditions recover well after getting COVID-19. **We ask for your cooperation in prioritizing access to healthcare for older adults and small children.**
 - Keep on hand government-approved self-test kits, over-the-counter medications, and three days' supply of food and water.
 - Use a self-test kit if you show symptoms and **submit your results to the Ehime Positive Results Registry** if you test positive.
 - If your symptoms worsen during self-isolation, please call the 24-hour Ehime Self-Treatment Hotline.
- Based on data from last year, only 10% of medical institutions could provide healthcare on Sundays, and that number decreases by 50% during the holiday season. **We ask for your cooperation in prioritizing access to healthcare for older adults and small children, especially on Sundays and over New Years.**
 - **Refer to the guidelines outlined by the four academic associations (such as The Japanese Association for Infectious Diseases) when visiting medical institutions and/or calling an ambulance** so as not to increase the medical burden.
 - **If your symptoms are mild, please go see a doctor on a weekday or during the day.**
- Free testing will be expanded to individuals returning to the prefecture from December 24, 2022 to January 12, 2023. Tests will be available at Matsuyama Airport, JR Matsuyama Station, Matsuyama Sightseeing Port, and other major transportation hubs. The Ehime Prefecture official website will have a list of testing locations that will be open during the holidays.
 - Be proactive in getting tested during the holiday season.
 - **Be especially careful if you plan to meet with older relatives or dine with others.**
- Please pay particular attention to the following basic preventive measures:
 - Ventilate regularly, even when heating is in use.
 - If you show symptoms, refrain from going out, going to work, or attending school.

- Be aware of seasonal influenza. (Basic prevention measures for COVID-19 are also effective for the flu.)
- Dining Restrictions
 - Regardless of the number of people or size of the restaurant, make sure to practice preventive measures, avoid long hours, and behave appropriately. Check everyone's physical conditions and ensure proper ventilation.
- Get the Omicron vaccine as soon as possible.
 - The New Year holidays are an important time for people to return to their hometowns and spend time with family, as well as prepare for school exams. Regardless of age, eligible individuals should aim to get vaccinated by the end of this year at the latest.
 - Vaccine effectiveness declines over time. Please get vaccinated even if you have tested positive in the past.

Lastly, stories about living in the pandemic submitted by local residents are being published on the Ehime Prefecture official website. These are accounts of their symptoms, how to get treated, and using the Ehime Positive Results Registry. Please give them a read as they could be helpful when you are recuperating at home.

We would like to ask everyone to cooperate in seeking medical care appropriate to your age and symptoms and practicing basic preventive measures to prevent a potential public health crisis.

Tokihiko NAKAMURA
Governor of Ehime Prefecture