

February 15, 2023

To the people of Ehime,

## **Declaring the End of the Medical Shortage Alert Period and Continuation of the Special Alert Period for the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

On December 15, 2022, a medical shortage was declared in Ehime Prefecture following a spike in COVID-19 cases due to the eighth wave and concerns that the healthcare system will be particularly strained over the holiday season.

Since then, thanks in part to everyone graciously complying with our guidelines and taking precautions, the number of cases has decreased significantly and fever clinics are no longer as congested as before. Likewise, the healthcare situation as a whole is improving, as the hospital bed occupancy rate has dropped below 30% and the daily number of ambulances dispatched for COVID-19 related cases is also decreasing. Based on this, we have decided to end the Medical Shortage Alert Period today.

In our announcement regarding the medical shortage, we strongly urged low-risk individuals and/or individuals with mild symptoms especially to refrain from seeking medical care on the weekends, holidays, or at night. This was to prioritize access to healthcare services for higher risk individuals such as small children and older adults. Now that the period has ended, it is no longer necessary for people to restrain themselves.

However, with that being said, the alert level will remain at "Special Alert Period" due to the continuous healthcare strain on local communities. There are still high-risk individuals such as older adults and those with underlying conditions at many medical institutions and senior care facilities who test positive and will require extensive treatment.

We ask everyone to be understanding about the current long-term strain on medical and emergency care services, and to continue to practice basic preventive measures even after the Medical Shortage Alert Period ends.

### **Special Requests**

#### **① Basic Preventive Measures**

- Ventilate regularly and wash hands frequently.

- Keep on hand government-approved antigen test kits, over-the-counter medications such as fever reducers and painkillers, and three days' worth of water, food, and other emergency supplies at home.
- Be careful not to catch the flu.

## ② Seeking Medical Care When Appropriate

- Follow guidelines provided by medical experts such as the Japanese Association for Infectious Diseases on how to seek proper medical care and when to call an ambulance.
- Individuals at low risk of severe illness and/or have mild symptoms should use a self-test kit if you feel you may have gotten COVID-19. If you test positive, please register your results at the Ehime Positive Persons Registration Center.

## ③ Vaccination

- Individuals of all ages are advised to get the Omicron vaccine as soon as possible to prevent severe illness.

News that Japan will downgrade the legal status of COVID-19 to Class 5 on May 8 have been released, but it is important to note that even if it is reclassified, **the virus itself will still be as infectious as ever.**

Even as mask restrictions ease on March 13, **basic preventive measures should still continue to be practiced.**

**It is important that everyone practice good habits and seek medical care when appropriate** in order to prevent another spike in cases, which will increase the burden on our medical care facilities. We ask for your continued cooperation on addressing this situation.

Tokihiro NAKAMURA  
Governor of Ehime Prefecture