

To the people of Ehime,

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

On February 15, it was announced that the Medical Shortage Alert Period would come to an end, but the Special Alert Period would continue for the time being. This was due to the excessive burden on medical institutions and senior care facilities where many older adults and other individuals at high risk of severe illness were being cared for.

Since then, the situation has been gradually improving thanks to your cooperation. Most recently, the number of cases has dropped to an average of about 110 per week, the number of inpatients to about 30, and the bed occupation rate to 10%. **Based on this, it was decided that the Special Alert Period will also end starting today.**

However, the number of cases per capita here continues to be among some of the highest in Japan. Furthermore, there is a higher risk of infection as we enter a time of increased activity due to the new fiscal/school year, so **it is important to continue to take precautions.** Although this is the first time in three and a half months since restrictions were eased, it is still necessary to practice basic preventive measures. **Please cooperate in the following requests to protect yourself and others, especially those at risk of severe illness such as older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions.**

Requests

1. Practice Basic Preventive Measures

- Avoid the 3 C's (closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings), ventilate regularly, and wash hands frequently.
- Wear masks in the certain situations and be mindful when you cough.
- Stay home if you exhibit any symptoms and seek medical attention if you feel especially unwell.

2. Get the Omicron Vaccine

- Get the Omicron vaccine if you have not done so yet.
- If possible, individuals other than older adults, young children, and those with underlying medical conditions should get vaccinated by May 7.

*Individuals aged 12 to 65 who do not have underlying medical

conditions will not be able to get vaccinated between May 8 to August 31. You will need to wait until September.

On March 13, the Japanese government decided that masks will be left up to the individual, and from May 8, COVID-19 will be officially downgraded to Class 5 status, the same category as common infectious diseases such as seasonal influenza. This is a major turning point in the pandemic, but it is important to remember that COVID-19 will still be as infectious as ever. Please continue to take basic preventive measures appropriate to the situation in order to live in this “new normal” and prevent another spike in cases that would strain our healthcare system.

Tokihiro NAKAMURA
Governor of Ehime Prefecture