

January 11, 2022

To the people of Ehime

Ehime Prefecture Governor Tokihiro NAKAMURA

Infection Alert Period Measures 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 3rd, a positive case in Ehime suspected to have resulted from the Omicron variant was confirmed. Due to the highly infectious nature of this new COVID-19 variant and how it is rapidly becoming the dominant strain in positive cases within the prefecture, we have promptly begun preparing the necessary countermeasures against resurgence. Along with strengthening health care services, testing facilities, and school safety measures, we are reinforcing the call to action for businesses and residents in Ehime to prepare for a sixth wave of infections.

As the emergence of new cases remain at a constant high, signs of the spread of infection have appeared throughout all regions (Toyo, Chuyo, Nanyo). Based on this, it is highly possible that infections caused by Omicron were brought into the prefecture towards the end of the year and have already begun to spread since. Thus, on January 8th, it was concluded that strong precaution was necessary throughout Ehime, and the alert level was raised to enter an “Infection Alert Period”, subsequently leading to the necessary requests and countermeasures.

When analyzing the situation in prefectures that have already been hit by a massive growth in Omicron cases, we can see that the infection rate of the previous Delta variant is incomparable to the tremendous speed of Omicron.

On January 10th, the number of positive cases in Ehime had already exceeded 50 for the first time since the sixth wave begun. This number was updated every day over the three-day weekend. In addition, the situation in the prefecture is becoming more severe as clusters are being confirmed daily.

We must immediately be prepared for the number of positive cases to exceed 100 per day and the spread of infection to continue.

In order to keep the resurgence in cases as low as possible, the actions of everyone within the prefecture are more important than ever.

It is necessary for everyone to be aware that they may be infected, and for each individual to act cautiously in order to stop the spread.

For residents of Ehime, please comply with the following measures:

○ TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE PREFECTURE

- Refrain from traveling for non-essential purposes to areas where semi-emergency coronavirus prevention measures have begun.
- Determine carefully whether to travel to areas where the infection is spreading.
- Check the infection status of your destination and comply with the local precautionary measures if you do decide to travel.

○ MEAL GATHERING GUIDELINES

- **Avoid large groups and long hours.**

In addition, **limit to 4 people per table, ensure proper social distancing, and do not relocate while dining.**

For Matsuyama, Uwajima, and Imabari, where the number of positive cases is increasing, the general guideline is “4 people or less, within 2 hours” at non-certified restaurants.

Furthermore, Saijo and Niihama may begin to implement similar guidelines depending on the situation.

- **Anyone who has traveled outside the prefecture since the beginning of the year or has been in contact with those who have should refrain from going to meal gatherings for about a week.**
 - Please visit a free testing facility and confirm negative test results beforehand if you plan to go anyway.
- **Anyone with cold symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, fatigue, digestive issues (diarrhea), or a fever should not attend or be allowed to attend a gathering.**
- **Only go to restaurants that have thorough infection control measures, such those that have been infection prevention certified.**
 - In particular, there were many cases of poor or structurally difficult ventilation in places where clusters have occurred already.

Moreover, to prevent the spread of infection, it is very important for those who show symptoms to avoid contact with others and consult a doctor as soon as possible.

Even if your symptoms are mild and only resemble a common cold—such as a fever, sore throat, fatigue, or diarrhea—**please do not jump to conclusions and instead seek immediate medical advice.**

The rapid spread of infection, which appears to be due to Omicron, has significantly increased the burden on medical institutions and health care services overall. If there is no further reduction in number of cases, the health care services will have to concentrate on simply linking positive cases to the necessary medical care. Now, more than ever, please understand that it is crucial for everyone to take the necessary actions to protect themselves, their families, their friends, and others around them.