

Message to Residents of Kagawa Prefecture from the Governor concerning “Future Measures Following the Reclassification of COVID-19 as a Category V Infectious Disease”

As of May 8th 2023, unless outstanding circumstances arise, such as the emergence of a mutant strain with significantly different pathogenicity from the Omicron variant, COVID-19 will be reclassified as a Category V Infectious Disease under the Infectious Diseases Control Law. Until now, our response has been based on the Act on Special Measures against Novel Influenza, and in accordance with the Basic Response Policy and industry-specific guidelines. However, following the reclassification under the Infectious Diseases Control Law, the Basic Response Policy will be abolished.

Starting May 8th, basic infection control measures used in daily life will be left to the judgment of individuals and businesses, respecting independent choice.

Future Measures Following the Reclassification of COVID-19 as a Category V Infectious Disease (Main Points)

The Healthcare Delivery System

After the reclassification to Category V, the healthcare delivery system will shift from a limited number of medical institutions providing special care, based on inpatient measures in principle and with the involvement of the government, to a wide range of medical institutions providing normal care.

For the time being, those who have symptoms such as fever and wish to receive treatment will be asked to visit an outpatient medical institution. Information on these outpatient institutions will also be posted on the Prefecture website.

As of May 8th, 419 medical institutions have been designated as outpatient medical institutions that can respond to fever cases, and 39 institutions have not yet been designated but are treating such patients, making a total of 458 institutions that are scheduled to respond to these cases. The plan is to encourage medical institutions to continue these efforts even after May 8th, aiming for a total of 530 medical institutions able to handle fever patients by the end of August.

As for the inpatient care system, the maximum number of hospitalizations during the most recent outbreak of Omicron was 510, and, after the reclassification to Category V as of May 8th, we expect to be able to admit a total of 591 patients- 353 at priority medical institutions, and 238 at other medical institutions. We will continue to make necessary efforts after the reclassification so that each medical institution will be able to provide inpatient services.

Medical Expenses

After the reclassification to Category V, patients will be asked to pay 10% to 30% of their own medical expenses. The cost of expensive COVID-19 medicines, however, will continue to be covered by public funds until the end of September.

Measures to be taken in Care Facilities (for the elderly, etc.)

Many elderly people at high risk of serious illness live in care facilities. In light of this, frequent testing of facility staff and residents will continue even after the reclassification.

In addition, initiatives such as the dispatch of cluster response teams in the event of a cluster

outbreak (including cases where a cluster is anticipated), and subsidies for in-facility medical care, etc. will also be continued.

We will also continue to strengthen infection control measures at care facilities where clusters have frequently occurred.

In the event that a resident needs to be hospitalized, a commissioned physician at the facility is required to coordinate with the medical institution beforehand. If coordination is difficult, please contact the Kagawa Prefecture COVID-19 Coordination Support Desk, which will be established within the prefectural government office.

Vaccination

Free COVID-19 vaccination will continue until March 2024.

Those who are 5 years old or older and have had their first and second vaccinations but have not yet been vaccinated against the Omicron variant are eligible to receive vaccinations until May 7th.

Between May 8th and the end of August, those 65 years of age or older, those with underlying medical conditions, and healthcare workers and caregivers can receive one more round of vaccinations for the Omicron variant.

From September onward, all persons aged 5 years and older who have had their initial vaccinations can receive one more dose.

In addition, 1st to 3rd doses of vaccinations will continue to be available for those aged 6 months to 4 years.

Monitoring and Dissemination of the Spread of Infection

As for the publication of the number of newly infected persons, until May 7th (publication on May 8th), the number of patients diagnosed and reported as having COVID-19 at medical institutions, and the number of persons who tested positive by self-testing and were registered at a COVID-19 Patient Registration Center will be published as before.

After that, we will shift to fixed-point surveillance, in which fixed-point medical institutions will report their weekly patient numbers Monday-Sunday to the prefectural government, who will publish this information in the "Kagawa Prefecture Infectious Disease Weekly Report" every Friday. The first weekly report after the shift to the fixed-point survey is scheduled for release May 19th.

Conclusion

Due to the reclassification to Category V, as of May 7th, we will lift the request for cooperation from prefectural residents and businesses and restrictions on holding events. The Kagawa Safe Restaurant Certification System based on the Law Concerning Special Measures against Novel Influenza, and the Kagawa Prefecture Response Policy will no longer be in effect.

We would like to express our gratitude to all prefectural residents and businesses for their cooperation in infection control measures over this long period.

However, please keep in mind that even though COVID-19 has been downgraded to Category V, its severity and infectivity has not changed.

Going forward, we ask for your support and understanding as we focus on protecting the elderly and other high risk people, and work with the national government, cities and towns, and medical associations to take necessary measures to protect the health and livelihood of all residents of Kagawa Prefecture.

April 24, 2023

IKEDA Toyohito, Governor of Kagawa Prefecture