

Regarding Future Measures in Response to COVID-19

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COVID-19 Countermeasures Headquarters
Emergency Revitalisation of Socio-Economic Activities Headquarters

1 Outbreak status

As Japan faces an alarming spike in COVID-19 variant cases, circumstances remain tense in the eighteen prefectures falling under the state of emergency and emergency-level priority measures.

Locally, Oita Prefecture has been witnessing minor but noticeable improvements in infection control owing to the understanding and cooperation of residents. While daily case counts had peaked at 47.93 cases per 100,000 population at the highest, numbers have fallen to 22.73 cases per 100,000 population as of late. Additionally, 99% of local dining facilities have responded to the prefecture's request to shorten business hours – since the appeal became effective from May 12, no dining related cases have been recorded.

Meanwhile, general hospital bed occupancy rates are at 50%, and hospital bed occupancy rates for patients with severe symptoms are at 15% – with over 40 people per 100,000 populations hospitalised, Oita remains in a precarious situation as the prefecture continues to fall under Level III on the COVID-19 alert scale. The period for self-quarantine and the shortening of business hours will be prolonged so that case counts may fall to a level that can confront potential rebound.

The new variant is showing signs of becoming mainstream. According to recent analysis, there has been an increase in cases at workplaces and schools that adhere to infection control measures. While household case counts have also risen, it is highly likely that these cases are sourced from workplaces. Overall, the abovementioned observations indicate the need for further actions in terms of infection control.

There are concerns that the outbreak will continue to spread across Kyushu, with the confirmation of the new variant found in India being especially worrying.

Based on a combination of factors, the prefecture requests that citizens adhere to following measures until Sun, June 13.

2 Specific measures

(1) Self-quarantine

All residents should refrain from leaving home for non-essential, non-urgent matters. Reconsider all travels across prefectoral borders.

(2) Dining Facilities

All dining facilities are to continue shortening business hours and close by 9PM. Diners should refrain from using the “Oita Miryoku Coupon (Oita Miryoku kuupon-ken [おおいた味力食うぽん券]).”

(3) Thorough measures towards the new variant

In addition to diligent handwashing and using hand disinfectants, residents should make effort in avoiding any of the 3Cs (closed spaces, crowded places, close-contact settings). Ensure to carry out thorough infection control measures when high-risk settings are unavoidable.

Face-to-face and other forms of physical contact should be avoided in class, club activities and other school settings.

Nonwoven masks should be worn when working indoors. Double-mask in high-risk settings while taking care to avoid heatstroke. In conjunction to the usage of masks, the prefecture recommends that residents maintain appropriate physical distance from each other and reduce conversation times. Masks should be worn during group dining sessions, and conversations should be kept to a minimum during mealtimes.

The prefecture urges all workplaces to implement remote work whenever possible.

(4) Supporting businesses

Assistance funds will be granted to facilities that have complied to the prefecture's request to shorten business hours.

Other businesses that have been negatively impacted by the restrictions but are ineligible to the national financial subsidy or the prefecture's assistance fund (such

as liquor stores and taxi operators) are eligible to the prefectural financial subsidy.

Locally produced agricultural and fishery products are being used in school lunches to boost consumption as demand for restaurant dining remain low.

In addition, in an effort to support the work of art and cultural organisations, the prefectural will subsidise cancellation fees for postponed or suspended local events.

3 Vaccination rollout

The vaccination rollout for older adults aged 65 or up is due to be completed by the end of July. In addition to securing healthcare staff with the cooperation from large-scale medical institutions, the prefecture is also supporting vaccination efforts in local municipalities through the distribution of assistance funds for medical institutions.

Based on the occurrence of multiple school clusters, teaching staff stationed at elementary to elementary high levels will be given priority to the vaccine. This group will be eligible for inoculation at the same time as residents with underlying health conditions and residents working at care facilities. The rollout is due to be completed by the end of summer break so that students may learn in a safe environment.

4 Conclusion

The prefecture thanks residents for complying with long-term infection control. While the process may be a cause for frustration and inconvenience, we have accomplished reliable results owing to your strenuous efforts. We ask for your understanding and cooperation in the matter, with the hope that restrictions will ease as soon as possible.