

## **Regarding the Response to COVID-19 Going Forward**

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022

Oita Prefecture Novel Coronavirus Infection Countermeasure Headquarters

Oita Prefecture Emergency Socio-Economic Revitalisation Headquarters

During this seventh wave of infections spurred by the BA.5 variant, the number of COVID-19 infections within the prefecture has risen to over 75,293 cases in the two month period between last month and last weekend. This makes up 56% of the total number of positive cases in Oita Prefecture, which stands at 133,478, in two and a half years. The BA.5 variant has spurred a large scale surge in cases that we have not hitherto seen.

Since the beginning of the seventh wave of infections, we have, as a prefecture, secured the largest-scale increase to-date in hospital beds and overnight recuperation facility rooms. The number of hospitals has been increased from 46 with 508 hospital beds, to 49 with 529 hospital beds; alongside this, we have increased the number of overnight recuperation facilities from 8 with 1,000 rooms, to 11 with 1,370 beds. However, despite this, the number of cases amongst the elderly that have been classed as more severe than moderate illness, have increased as of late, with hospital bed capacity consistently exceeding 50%. With that being said, we have reached a level where there is concern regarding the impact this will have on medical care across the board.

In order to prevent strain on medical facilities and personnel, it is necessary to keep the surge of infections at bay and establish a path to normality as quickly as possible.

We understand the inconvenience this will cause, however in order to protect the medical system, which is currently in a dire situation, we ask for your understanding and cooperation on the following measures.

### 1. Enforcement of fundamental infection countermeasures

We request that residents closely follow fundamental infection countermeasures, including frequent ventilation, wearing masks inside, washing hands, and avoidance of the 3 Cs (closed spaces, crowded places, close-contact settings).

Ventilation is especially vital. Though there will be times where the air conditioning will be in use, please ensure ventilation at least once every 30 minutes.

## 2. In protecting the elderly and those with underlying health conditions

We ask that the elderly and those with underlying health conditions, as well as those closely associated with these persons, avoid outings where they would be mixing with other people or going to places where the risk of infection is high.

Rapid antigen tests are already being delivered to elderly care facilities, and staff of these facilities are being asked to take regular tests. Please do all that you can to protect the elderly and those with underlying health conditions who are not admitted at a facility.

## 3. Vaccination

Over 60% of those over the age of 60 who had their third dose over 5 months ago have been vaccinated with their fourth dose. We request that medical staff and staff of elderly care facilities receive their fourth dose of the vaccine as soon as possible in order to prevent the spread of infection at home and at work.

The progress of vaccination with the third dose amongst the younger generation is sluggish. For those who have not yet received their third vaccination dose, we request that you please make use of the Prefectural Vaccination Centre, where same-day appointments are being offered.

## 4. Free-of-charge rapid antigen test kit distribution and COVID-19 infection registration

With the increase in infections, the number of people being examined at medical testing facilities (in other words, outpatient clinics specialising in fevers and other such symptoms) has increased, and a situation has arisen where a lot of time is required to perform these examinations. In order to avoid strain on these outpatient clinics, the prefecture has decided to deliver free rapid antigen test kits to those aged 12 to 40 who do not have underlying health conditions, as there is a low risk of these people developing severe symptoms. From Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August, you can get test kits delivered to you through an online application service. Alternatively, for those who require a test kit on an urgent basis, a direct delivery option via a part of the medical system (announcement to come separately via the Oita Prefectural Government Homepage) will be available, also from Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August.

Those who test positive via self-testing will not be seen at a medical facility. Instead,

a notification of infection will be sent to Oita Health Centre by the Infection Registration Centre, which will begin operations from Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> August.

We request that all those who are eligible to receive free rapid antigen tests make use of the systems in place when infection is suspected. We also request that the elderly, those with underlying health conditions, and young children undergo a medical examination at a medical institution as soon as possible when infection is suspected.

We thank you for your cooperation.