

Regarding the Response to COVID-19 Going Forward

September 20, 2022

Oita Prefecture Novel Coronavirus Infection Countermeasure Headquarters

Oita Prefecture Emergency Socio-Economic Revitalization Headquarters

New daily cases of COVID-19 within the prefecture have settled down, with every day from August 24 to August 28 having less cases than the same day of the week from the week prior. Hospital bed capacity, which was previously a cause for concern, has also decreased from 50%, now hovering around 40%. We would again like to extend our thanks to you all for your cooperation in making this possible.

1. The “Health Follow-Up Center” and review of the full reporting of cases

At the beginning of this month, the national government let it be known that they wish to transition to a new stage for living alongside COVID-19 and decided that a review of the current reporting system, in which all cases are reported with a case notification, was necessary throughout the country. The Prefecture immediately responded to this decision and began working alongside those in the healthcare industry to review our current system. As expected, the biggest cause for concern if full notification is no longer necessary is the response the Prefecture can provide for low-risk persons who become ill, since they will no longer be subject to case notifications. To that end, we will be covering for this eventuality by establishing the “Health Follow-Up Center,” which will have several functions as detailed below. (Please see the attached chart)

First, information about the system for persons who are believed to have caught COVID-19. For those who have tested positive when taking a COVID-19 test at a healthcare or testing facility and have a high risk of severe illness will continue to have a case notification reported to the Prefectural Public Health Center (1.1). They will be able to receive priority care such as health observations, consultations, medical exams, and coordination for admission to a hospital (1.2). This will specifically apply to: those aged 65 or older, those aged under 65 who require hospitalization, those who have pre-existing conditions and need to be prescribed COVID-19 treatment drugs, and those who are pregnant.

Those who are under the age of 65 and have a low risk of contracting serious illness will no longer have a case notification be reported to the Public Health Center. However, when receiving an examination at a test care facility, they will be given a

document entitled “Medical Results and Contact Form” and guided on how to register with the Health Follow-Up Center in case their symptoms worsen. If the patient then registers with the center via phone call or the internet, they will receive an email detailing several things to keep in mind while they are recuperating, as well as other information (2.1). In addition, by inputting their daily condition using their smartphone, a patient can also receive health observations and consultations for if their condition worsens (2.2).

Furthermore, counts of current cases (separated by age group) will continue to be reported by healthcare facilities to the Public Health Center, regardless of whether a person is subject to a case notification. (1.3)

At the same time, we are aware that persons who test positive using a home test may have the same concerns as those who tested at a healthcare facility. To that effect, the “COVID-19 Registration Center” will be rechristened the “COVID-19 Self-Test Registration Center.” Registering with this center will allow for individuals who self-tested positive to receive the same support from the Follow-Up Center as those listed above (2.2).

Until now, the COVID-19 Registration Center has only been for those from age 12 to 39. However, with the changes to the case notification system, it will now be for those aged from 12 to 64.

This type of system has been well received in the medical community, and should serve well in dispelling first-time fears. We have also finished talks with Oita City, the location of the Public Health Center, and are proceeding with preparations to open the Health Follow-Up Center on September 26.

We ask that positive testers who are low-risk and no longer subject to case notifications register with the center, even if they only have light symptoms, so that things may proceed smoothly in case their condition worsens or they require hospitalization. We especially ask that those who live alone and the guardians of children who test positive take the time to register.

2. Vaccination

The new Omicron variant booster* will be supplied to various locations throughout the prefecture starting this week and from next week municipalities will begin providing vaccinations when they are ready to do so. The target for this booster is everyone aged 12 and over who have already received two shots.

Inoculations will start from people who are eligible for the fourth shot (such as those 60 or over, those who have pre-existing conditions, and healthcare workers), but

have not received it yet. The Omicron booster will be used instead of the conventional booster. This will expand to include those other than the persons mentioned above beginning in the middle of October.

Those who already have a vaccination ticket for the third or fourth shots can use that ticket as-is for the Omicron booster. Those without a ticket will be sent one in turn by their municipality, so we ask that everyone quickly reserve a spot and get vaccinated when they can.

In addition, the Prefectural Vaccination Center is planning to switch from the conventional vaccine to the Omicron variant vaccine for those receiving their third or fourth shots beginning on Thursday, September 29. Same-day reservations are also possible, so please get vaccinated as soon as you can.

*About the Omicron variant booster

The Omicron variant booster is a bivalent vaccine targeted at both conventional variants and the Omicron variant (BA.1). It is expected to have even greater potential in preventing serious symptoms than the convention vaccine currently being used. It also should have a greater effect in preventing both infection and development of any symptoms, albeit possibly only for a short period of time. It is also believed that it should be effective against any potential new variants.

3. Enforcement of fundamental infection countermeasures

The current situation regarding infections in the prefecture is improving. However, there are still many new cases happening every day. We continue to ask for your cooperation in maintaining fundamental infection countermeasures, such as ventilation, wearing masks indoors, washing your hands, and avoiding the “three Cs”. Ventilation is especially important. The weather is only getting better, so we again ask that you always ensure apt ventilation wherever you may be.