



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA

**KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH**  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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### **Federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19 ends on May 11, 2023**

HONOLULU, HI –The federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19, declared under Section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, will expire at the end of the day on May 11, 2023. As the PHE ends, high levels of vaccination, widespread population immunity, and available treatments have significantly reduced the risk of severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalization, and death.

“We mourn the loss of loved ones from the pandemic. However, our experience demonstrated what we can accomplish when we come together as a community, having the lowest mortality rate in the nation,” said Hawaii State Health Director Dr. Kenneth Fink. “Although the federal PHE is ending, we’ve learned that we must remain vigilant and continue to invest in public health preparedness.”

In terms of what the end of the PHE means for the public, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provided the following information:

- Vaccines will remain available. Access to COVID-19 vaccines will generally not be affected for now. The U.S. government is currently distributing free [COVID-19 vaccines](#) for all adults and children. To help keep communities safe from COVID-19, HHS remains committed to maximizing continued access to COVID-19 vaccines.
- COVID-19 at-home tests may not be covered by insurance. Insurance providers will no longer be required to waive costs or provide free at-home COVID-19 tests. COVID-19 tests ordered by healthcare providers when clinically indicated are generally expected to be covered by insurance but may have cost-sharing.
- For people with Medicaid coverage, COVID-19 testing and treatment will remain covered at no cost through September 2024.

- No cost testing may be available to people without insurance or in areas of high social vulnerability through CDC's [Increasing Community Access to Testing \(ICATT\) program](#). Participating community and pharmacy partners can be located through [CDC's No Cost COVID-19 Testing Locator](#).
- CDC will discontinue reporting of COVID-19 Community Levels and some other COVID-19 metrics like percent positivity. These changes are because of changing laboratory requirements with the end of the PHE, and also because case data has become less reliable as self-testing gains in popularity.

In addition to the information provided by the CDC and HHS, the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is notifying the public of the following:

- Sometime later this year, COVID-19 vaccines are anticipated to become commercially available, and DOH will provide more information on this transition to providers and the public as it becomes available. DOH remains committed to working with providers and federal agencies to ensure equitable vaccine supply for Hawai'i residents.
- DOH will continue to partner with long-term care facilities, other healthcare and congregate settings, schools, and community organizations to investigate illness clusters and outbreaks of concern, provide technical assistance, and educate partners and the public on how to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.
- DOH will continue to maintain dashboards that provide situational awareness of COVID-19 trends and impacts in Hawai'i.
- While masks are no longer required in public settings in the state of Hawai'i, use of a properly fitting high quality mask remains an important tool for preventing COVID-19 and many other respiratory illnesses. Those with high risk of severe disease, such as kupuna and those with chronic medical conditions, as well as those who interact closely with these groups, should consider wearing a mask in situations where social distancing is not possible.
- Vaccines are still the best tool for preventing infection or severe illness from COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for anyone over 6 months of age. Anyone who has not yet received a bivalent vaccine dose should get one. And anyone who is at increased risk for severe infection and has received a bivalent dose should consider receiving a second dose. Bivalent vaccines provide better coverage for the variants of COVID-19 currently in the community. Detailed vaccine recommendations can be found [here](#). Find your nearest COVID-19 vaccine provider at [Vaccines.gov](#).
- Vaccinations and masking are particularly important for people who are immunocompromised or for those who have frequent contact with individuals who fall into this category.

For more information:

- [CDC - End of Federal COVID-10 Public Health Emergency \(PHE\) Declaration](#).
- [HHS – Fact Sheet on End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#)
- [HHS - COVID-19 Public Health Emergency \(PHE\) Transition Roadmap](#)

- [COVID-19 State of Hawai'i Portal](#)

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