

NEWS RELEASE

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End of the Public Health Emergency Declaration *What it means for Georgians*

ATLANTA – The federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) declaration will expire at the end of the day. Now that we have safe and effective vaccines, ample testing infrastructure, and most people have some level of immunity due to vaccination or infection, COVID-19 is no longer a public health emergency.

As a result of these and other efforts in Georgia, since the end of the peak of the Omicron surge at the end of January 2022:

- Daily COVID-19 reported cases are down over 98%,
- COVID-19 deaths have declined 97%, and
- Newly reported COVID-19 hospitalizations are down 97%.

In Georgia, the end of the PHE will have minimal impact on the public. Most prevention tools, like vaccines, treatments, and testing, will remain available. Other tools such as certain data sources and reporting, will change.

COVID vaccines and tests **will still be available** at no cost to the public at health departments throughout the state for the foreseeable future. For information about vaccine locations near you, please visit <https://dph.georgia.gov/covid-vaccine>. Tests, both lab/PCR tests and over the counter tests, are available at no cost at local health departments, 24-hour kiosks around the state, and at regional drive through testing sites. Testing locations and hours and at home test kits can be found at <https://dph.georgia.gov/covidtesting>.

Medication to prevent severe COVID-19, such as Paxlovid, will remain available at no cost while supplies purchased by the federal government last. After that, the price will be determined by the medication manufacturer and individual health insurance coverage. Check with your healthcare provider if you need early treatment, within 48 hours of symptoms, to prevent severe COVID.

The end of the PHE declaration also means some of the data that was mandated will no longer be reported to DPH or nationally. COVID-19 cases will remain reportable and cases that are reported to DPH will still be published in the DPH Weekly COVID Status Report, as will deaths and some hospital data. Percent positivity will no longer be published since reporting of negative COVID-19 test results which are required for calculating percent positivity will no longer be reported. This also means the CDC's Community Transmission Index and Community Transmission Levels will be discontinued. DPH will continue to update the Status Report every Wednesday for several more weeks as we assess the data we receive and transition to monthly updates.

Most importantly, the end of the PHE does not mean that COVID-19 is over. Georgians should stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations, get tested if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms, stay home if they are sick and check with their healthcare provider about available COVID-19 treatments.

Additional information about the end of the PHE can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/end-of-phe.html>. For updates on COVID-19 log onto <https://dph.georgia.gov/> or follow @GaDPH on Twitter and Facebook.