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EDITORS: State leaders will be available to answer reporters' questions during a media availability today between 11 a.m. and noon through [Zoom](#); members of the public can view a livestream on [YouTube](#).

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State lifts COVID-19 response measures as federal emergency ends

Lifting of COVID-19 vaccine requirement for education, health care workers among other changes taking effect in coming weeks

PORTLAND, Ore. — In alignment with the federal COVID-19 public health emergency ending May 11, state health officials today announced the lifting of health-protective measures that helped reduce COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths, and expanded access to services during the pandemic.

The changes affect a wide range of programs and services. Some changes are effective May 11, and others will take effect in the coming weeks. Other changes put in place during the COVID-19 emergency will continue after the end of the federal emergency.

“These changes are an acknowledgement of the progress we’ve made over the last three-plus years,” said Dean Sidelinger, M.D., M.S.Ed., health officer and state epidemiologist at OHA. “However, we know COVID-19 will remain a part of our lives for years to come, so we need to continue taking steps that prevent its spread, such as staying up to date with vaccinations. My thoughts go out to those sick with COVID-19, mourning a loved one, or still suffering with symptoms following their acute infection.”

Highlights of the changes resulting from the ending of the federal public health emergency are as follows:

Vaccination requirements

Effective Thursday (May 11), workers in health care settings will no longer be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 under state rules, OHA announced today. A similar vaccination requirement for teachers and school staff in private and public education settings will lift June 17, the end of the last week of school, to support consistency in student instruction through this school year.

Exposure, isolation guidance

A five-day period of isolation for those infected with COVID-19 also will no longer be recommended for the general population, including people in K-12 education settings. Oregon public health officials believe widespread population immunity due to vaccination and repeated infections means many COVID-19 infections are now likely asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic, and the five-day isolation period is doing little to reduce transmission.

Instead, officials say, the recommendation for the general population will be to stay home until fever free for 24 hours and symptoms are improving; avoid contact with individuals at increased risk for severe disease, including older adults and those with underlying medical conditions; and consider masking for 10 days.

School testing

Diagnostic testing resources for students and staff with symptoms or exposure to COVID-19 in schools will remain available through July 31, 2024. iHealth self-tests will remain available for K-12 schools to request and distribute to their school communities until current stock is depleted. Weekly opt-in “screening” testing for K-12 students and staff without COVID-19 symptoms will end July 31 as funding for the effort wraps up.

The endings of the vaccination, isolation and some testing measures are among a spate of impending changes over the coming weeks as Oregon, and the nation, continue the long, careful transition out of the pandemic. A number of “flexibilities” put in place during the pandemic will remain in effect.

The following are among the COVID-era activities and requirements that will continue after May 11:

- An extension of a 90-day “reasonable opportunity period” for non-citizens to verify citizenship or immigration status to 180 days so they can enroll in Oregon Health Plan (OHP).
- A requirement that OHP providers, including coordinated care organizations, continue to cover COVID-19 vaccinations and treatment without cost sharing, and that commercial health insurers cover vaccinations without cost sharing. In Oregon, vaccinations are covered no matter where someone gets a shot. Oregonians should contact their health care provider about where they can get vaccinated.
- A requirement that Oregon health care providers be reimbursed for language interpreter services (spoken or signed) provided during an office visit.
- A requirement that OHP providers offer access to telehealth services.
- In addition, state officials are currently implementing previously announced changes in access to Medicaid coverage and other human services programs administered by the state and federal governments.

The following are among many other changes taking effect May 11:

COVID-19 reporting

- A change in how OHA monitors COVID-19. Epidemiologists will transition to a more sustainable and effective model that focuses on measures that indicate transmission, and continue monitoring for severe outcomes, including hospitalizations and death. Case data, which is based on individual laboratory test reporting and is heavily biased, will be retired. The changes align with CDC recommendations and mirror how influenza is monitored.
- A change in how OHA reports COVID-19 data. Epidemiologists will streamline data reporting to a smaller number of dashboards updated weekly. Data visualizations will include graphs showing statewide percent positivity, wastewater levels and trends, distribution of variants, hospitalization rates and capacity, death counts, emergency department visit and vaccination trends. Dashboards with case counts and county data will be archived.

Health coverage, supports

- The end of extended health coverage, services and supports for people with disabilities and older adults, and extra food benefits that were provided during federal emergency. Continuous coverage for Medicaid also is ending. Oregon began a “redetermination” process April 1 to help people renew their OHP membership and other Medicaid benefits, and stay on the plan, and is encouraging members to keep mailing addresses, phone numbers and email addresses current to ensure they receive information about their benefits in the coming months. More information about the renewals process and options for updating contact information is at oregon.gov/oha/phe. Those with questions can reach out to the ONE Customer Service Center at 800-699-9075 (TTY 711) from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Pacific Time, Monday through Friday.

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