

Okinawa Prefectural Policy on Countermeasures in Accordance with the Designation of "Areas for Intensified Measures against BA.5"

【Request Period】 Thursday, August 11 – Wednesday, August 31, 2022

Details of Implementation

To control the spread of the BA.5 strain, and to protect prefectural residents' livelihoods and lives, based on article 24, section 9 of the Act on Special Measures Against COVID-19 (hereinafter referred to as "The Act"), requests will be made to prefectural residents and businesses, and any necessary cooperation will be encouraged.

Area

The entirety of Okinawa prefecture

Current Situation

In Okinawa prefecture, BA.5 is now the dominant strain. The outbreak has continued and the spread of COVID-19 has occurred among all generations.

The hospital bed occupancy rate has remained high and the number of medical staff on leave at priority medical facilities responsible for COVID-19 treatment continues to increase. As a result, Okinawa Prefecture issued the "Okinawa Prefecture Medical State of Emergency Declaration" on July 21. Subsequently, on July 24, the medical phase was shifted to the emergency phase and medical institutions postponed general hospitalizations and scheduled surgeries to secure beds for patients who urgently needed hospitalization.

Under these circumstances, we consulted with the national government and Okinawa was designated as "Areas for Intensified Measures against BA.5" on August 4.

In accordance with the designation as "Areas for Intensified Measures" we have been working to strengthen infection prevention measures and to deal with the current medical care shortage, with the support of the national government. However in facilities for the elderly, the situation remains very difficult, there were 1,381 COVID-19 cases as of August 8, 77 of whom were receiving oxygen and other elderly people in need of hospitalization are unable to do so.

Protecting yourself and your loved ones will lead to the protection of our medical care system and society.

We appreciate the cooperation of all prefectural residents and businesses.

The Expanding of Measures in Accordance with the Designation of "Areas for Intensified Measures against BA.5"

We are prioritizing the following measures against the highly infectious subvariant.

- ◆ **Prevent the spread of infection in elderly care facilities** (Increase the participation rate of regular testing, encourage facility staff and users to get vaccinated, etc.)
- ◆ **Thorough implementation of COVID-19 countermeasures at events** (Patrols by prefectural officials on the day of the event to ensure that alcohol is not brought into the event, requests to refrain from events that do not meet the current standards, etc.)
- ◆ **Reinforcement of notices to visitors from outside of the prefecture** (Refrain from travel when feeling unwell, thorough implementation of tests before travelling, thorough health management during a trip including packing medicine, etc.)
- ◆ **Encourage vaccination** (Advice and cooperation with municipalities that are in charge of vaccination, and increasing the vaccination rate through the prefecture offering on-site vaccination.)

Request to Prefectural Residents

① Make sure to take thorough COVID-19 countermeasures on a daily basis and please refrain from all non-essential and non-emergency outings as much as possible.

- If you need to go out or travel, please make sure to avoid “closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings”. The elderly should refrain from meeting people that they do not live with. In addition, **for those who come into contact with elderly people regularly, please refrain from behaviors with a high risk of infection.**
- Make it habit to ventilate, wear a mask properly, use hand sanitizer, and observe your health daily (especially, the elderly, people who have underlying conditions, and expectant mothers).
- **In case of infection, keep at least a three-day supply of food, medical antigen test kit, and medicine, for example, fever reducers stocked at home.**
- When there is a high risk of infection at the destination, such as when going to your parents' home, staying overnight or attending an event, please confirm negative results with a PCR or other test immediately before the start of the trip.

② When you dine and interact with your friends, please avoid large, prolonged gatherings and wear a mask indoors.

- In places where children gather (such as after-school day-cares, cram schools, etc.), adults should check infection control measures such as the ventilation and proper usage of masks.
- Dine with no more than 4 people, for no more than 2 hours.
- As much as possible, have dinner only with family members whom you live with or people who are always with you.
- Please refrain from attending events (**including interactions with family members you do not live with, such as during Obon, etc.**) where large groups of people are unmasked or please confirm negative results with COVID-19 tests beforehand.
- **Please do not bring alcohol to an event that you participate in.**
- When dining, use an "Infection Prevention Measure Certified Facility", avoid visiting restaurants and other facilities which are not taking thorough infection prevention measures.

③ If you have any symptoms such as a fever, sore throat, cough, or runny nose please refrain from going to work, school, on outings, and to group dining.

- If you have any cold symptoms, please make sure to avoid the elderly and expectant mothers for a week as they have a higher risk of a severe case of COVID-19.
- If you feel unwell or you may have been infected, you can use a medical antigen test kit if you have a mild symptoms or to take a COVID-19 test and refrain from the misuse of ambulances.

④ People aged 60 years and over, should receive their fourth COVID-19 vaccination. (Those who have not received their third dose of the vaccine should also be vaccinated as soon as possible).

- Keeping up-to-date with vaccinations reduces the risk of hospitalization and death.
- Residents of **elderly care facilities** and users of day facilities should receive their vaccination as soon as possible, as they are at higher risk of severe infection.
- People at risk of a severe case, such as those who have underlying conditions such as hypertension, obesity, and those who smoke, can also lower their risk of a severe case by receiving their vaccination.

【To Travelers (Those Considering a Travel to Okinawa)】

- **Before traveling to Okinawa, please conduct a thorough health check. If you feel unwell, postpone your trip. We look forward to seeing you another time. Before arriving and during your stay in Okinawa, please make sure to take basic infection prevention measures.**
- **For those that will visit Okinawa on a school trip, take thorough infection prevention measures, and also make sure to act in accordance with the "Okinawa School Trip Quarantine and Sightseeing Guidelines" and other relevant guidelines.**
- **For other purposes, such as travel, before your arrival in Okinawa, update your vaccination 2 weeks before the trip starts, or confirm a negative result with a PCR test or other tests. Especially in the event that you will interact with prefectural residents, such as while on a business trip, visiting your family, attending an event, please take a PCR test or other test in advance. (*Also, please take free tests provided by the prefecture in which you live, before your arrival in Okinawa.)**
- **For those who are unable to take a PCR test or antigen test in advance, we have established a system where one can take a PCR test upon their arrival at Naha Airport, Miyako Airport, Shimojishima Airport, New Ishigaki Airport, and Kumejima Airport.**
- **During your stay, please take the same actions that are expected of Prefectural residents as requested by this response policy, including the use of an Infection Prevention Measure Certified Facility.**
- **Medical institutions in Okinawa are overwhelmed, and it is difficult to see a doctor. For those who have chronic illnesses, take it easy and take care of your health during your stay. Also, ensure you have adequate supplies of prescribed medications, and bring extra medication when you visit Okinawa.**
- **If you feel unwell or have a fever during your stay, please consult the "Traveler's Access Center Okinawa".**

【Traveler's Access Center Okinawa (TACO)】

Phone: 098-840-1677 Operation hour: 8:00 ~21:00

Requests to Restaurants

<p>Target Facilities</p>	<p>[Restaurants] Restaurants (excluding takeout and delivery) [Entertainment facilities / wedding halls] Bars, karaoke boxes, wedding halls (etc.) that possess a restaurant business license under the Food Sanitation Act</p>
<p>Details of the Requests</p>	<p>○For all restaurants, allow only one group at one table with no more than 4 persons. (Excluding cases when care or assistance is necessary.)</p> <p>(For weddings and other ceremonial events, please follow the request for holding events.)</p> <p>○For all restaurants, please encourage customers to dine for no more than 2 hours.</p> <p>○For Infection Prevention Measure Certified Facilities, please continue to ensure that the restaurant is safe and secure by taking thorough infection prevention measures, including compliance with the industry specific guidelines.</p> <p>①Hygiene management of restaurant: Sufficient ventilation in the restaurant, disinfection of area and utensils touched by customers.</p> <p>②Safety and hygiene management of staff: Conducting thorough health management of staff, including daily body temperature checks before work. Recommend vaccination.</p> <p>③Safety for customers: Body temperature checks upon entry, sanitizing hands thoroughly, spaced seating, etc.</p> <p>(Deny entry to a customer who has symptoms, such as a fever, even if they are mild. Ensure customers comply with infection prevention measures.)</p> <p>○For restaurants that are not certified with Infection Prevention Measure Certified Facility Certification, we encourage these facilities to take thorough infection prevention measures and to get certified with "Infection Prevention Measure Certified Facility" as soon as possible.</p>

Request when Holding Events

- ◆ **As the COVID-19 situation is getting worse, we ask for your understanding and cooperation in preparing the Infection Prevention Safety Plan and submitting it to the Prefectural government.**
- ◆ **Request for Organizers to Hold Events in Accordance with the Event Capacity Requirements (maximum number of people, venue capacity, etc.).**

	Maximum Venue Capacity(*1)		
	Less than 5,000 people	Over 5,000 ~ less than 10,000 people	Over 10,000 people
Events Free from Loud Spectator Cheering /Shouting	Up to capacity	Up to 5,000 people(*3)	Up to Half of the capacity (*3)
Events with Loud Spectator Cheering and/or Shouting (*2)	Up to Half of the capacity		

*1: In the case a maximum venue capacity has not been set, the capacity shall be as follows.

- Events Free from Loud Spectator Cheering /Shouting → The spacing should be sufficient to avoid having close-contact between people (There should be enough to avoid person-to-person contact at a minimum).

- Events with Loud Spectator Cheering and/or Shouting → Sufficient space (2m as much as possible and at least 1m) between people must be provided.

*2: A "Loud Voice" is defined as "a spectator ①speaking louder than their usual voice and ②speaking up repeatedly and continuously", and events that actively encourage this practice or do not take sufficient necessary countermeasures are classified as "Events where spectators tend to shout".

*3: The maximum number of people is allowed up to the capacity of the facility, under the condition that an infection prevention safety plan is prepared and implemented.

- **Event Organizers should thoroughly comply with the industry specific guidelines, thoroughly implement tracking measures, such as the utilization of the national governments Contact Confirming Application (COCOA) and the LINE application base close contact notification system recommended by the Prefecture (RICCA), and creation of a list of participants.**
- **For events with more than 1,000 participants, the organizers must prepare and submit an Infection Prevention Safety Plan with specific measures to the prefectural government at least two weeks before the event. If it doesn't meet the request by the prefectural government, **review the event upon the request of the prefectural government or refrain from holding an event.****
- **Respond promptly in the event of a national outbreak or cluster at an event, and if the national government revises its industry-specific guidelines, capacity requirements and maximum number of people.**
- **For events with large numbers of people, recommend visitors to update with vaccinations or confirm negative results by PCR or other tests in advance.**
- **If food or drink is served, voluntary restraint should be requested outside the dedicated eating and drinking areas. However, this does not apply in environments where measures can be taken to ensure the wearing of masks except when eating or drinking, or to shorten eating and drinking times in order to reduce the time spent unmasking, on the basis that there is no vocalization.**
- **As the infection situation getting worse, we ask you to consider postponing the timing of any events involving the serving of alcohol. For events that do not have an Infection Prevention Safety Plan, infection control measures should be thoroughly implemented through the preparation of checklists and other. For more details, see the "Restrictions on holding events". (<https://www.pref.okinawa.lg.jp/site/chijiko/kohokoryu/koho/20200828.html>)**

- ◆ Participants of an event are asked to ensure they take basic infection control measures in order to reduce the risk of infection, such as going directly to the venue and home.

To Commercial and Visitor-attracting Facilities

The following infection control measures shall be implemented in sports facilities, amusement centers, cinemas, shopping malls and other facilities as regulated in Article 11, section 1 of the Special Measures Act.

- The compliance with the industry specific guidelines, implementation of thorough infection prevention measures.
- Control and guide visitors so that they do not crowd together (especially when holding events that attract visitors, work to ensure that it is not crowded or that people are close together).
- Requesting that visitors wear masks properly, etc.
- Take effective measures to prevent infection through droplets from conversation, etc. (Especially, for food courts, employing measures such as the installation of acrylic panels, etc. or ensuring seat spacing and thorough ventilation).

To Businesses

- Ensure that employees take care of their health condition thoroughly and if you feel unwell, do not come to work and do not make anyone who is unwell go to work.
- In cases that an employee tests positive or becomes a close contact of someone COVID-19 positive, negative proof of PCR or other tests shall not be required when the employee goes to work.
- Take measures to prevent dense commuting to and from work, such as working from home (teleworking), videoconferencing and expanding staggered working hours.
- Adhere to the Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 specified by the industry.
- Encourage vaccination in the workplace (please provide an environment conducive to vaccination).
- **Provide an environment that makes it easier for employees to nurse and take care of their children in case of home treatment or temporary closure of primary schools, etc. (By utilizing the subsidy for guardians affected by school closures, please establish a paid leave system for employees, etc.).**
- Conduct effective indoor ventilation and other measures to deal with aerosol infections, such as the constant operation of ventilation fans and additional window openings.
- **In elderly and disabled care facilities, infection control measures should be thoroughly implemented to prevent infection of facility users, such as wearing masks during recreation, opening windows during pick-up and drop-off, conducting pre-visit testing and conducting visits online, and separating the lines of flow at day care facilities.**
- **In elderly care facilities and facilities for persons with disabilities, conduct regular testing for employees and vaccination should be recommended to users.**

Implementation of Initiatives in Cooperation with the Prefecture in each Municipality.

- Raise awareness of infection prevention measures among local residents and call for cooperation from residents' associations, etc., by using the information vehicles and disaster warning systems.
- Municipalities that are in charge of vaccination should accelerate the third and fourth vaccination.
- **Please check the vaccination status of elderly persons requiring care and encourage them to receive vaccination through care managers and other care professionals.**
- **For events that do not meet the Prefectural standards taking place in local municipalities, encourage the review of the event upon the requests of the Okinawa Prefectural Response Policy or encourage the event be cancelled or postponed.**

Requests to Schools

- Based on the actions on the basis of the Sanitation Management Manuals, etc., please carry out effective indoor ventilation and the correct use of masks in response to the aerosol infection, including the constant operation of ventilation fans and additional window openings.
- Please refrain from educational activities with a particularly high risk of infection (*), regardless of the level in the Manual. Even in areas where infection is not spreading, the implementation of such activities should be carefully considered.
- Thoroughly monitor the health of teachers, staff and students, using health observation charts and health observation apps, and ensure they refrain from going to work, school, club activities, etc. when they are unwell.
- Take measures against heat stroke during summer when temperatures, humidity and heat indexes are high. When outdoors, make sure to inform people to remove their masks if there is no one else around.
- Club activities should be limited to approximately two hours on weekdays (including early morning practice) and three hours on weekends and holidays, and health checks should be carried out at the start of activities and before various competitions, with thorough infection prevention measures such as refraining from activities with a high risk of infection (*).
- Make sure to inform students to carry out the basic infection prevention measures, even during summer vacation.
- Please refrain from gathering at a friend's home during the summer vacation.
- Promote the use of RADECO, which allows symptomatic primary and junior high school, high school students and their family members living with them who may be a close contact person to carry out qualitative antigen testing at home.
- In cases that a teacher, staff member or student tests positive or becomes a close contact person, etc., the teacher, staff member, or student shall not be required to submit a negative PCR test or other tests before being allowed to go to work or school.
- *Examples: choral singing and playing of wind instruments such as recorders at close range in a room in music class, dense physical exercise in physical education, etc. (Infection prevention measures based on the characteristics of the Omicron strain from "the 12th Japanese government's coronavirus countermeasures subcommittee".)