

# Actions related to COVID-19 during the New Year Holidays

December 21, 2020

COVID-19 Countermeasures Headquarters

In light of the multiple cases of infection that have occurred within a short span of time from mid-November, the headquarters had previously made various suggestions during the December 8 meeting. At the time, the headquarters requested that all residents adhere to the following measures until the end of the year:

- (1) Exercise extra caution when planning group dining and drinking sessions in eating facilities, since many cases can be attributed to such settings;
- (2) Individuals aged in the 60-70 age group or above, who tend to pose higher risks for developing severe conditions, should adhere to infection prevention measures thoroughly when going outdoors – crowded areas that may cause overlap of the 3Cs, in particular, should be avoided.

Owing to the efforts of residents, the Oita Prefecture has lately recorded fewer than 10 cases per day. Moreover, hospital bed occupancy rates have dropped to 16.9%, falling lower than the 20% criteria for the Stage 3 phase.

Based on these observations, we believe that Oita currently remains at the Stage 2 phase, which still indicates a high burden on the medical structure.

Observations from the past two weeks show that:

- (1) There has been a 1.6 time increase in patients aged in their twenties – most of these cases can be traced back to group dining and drinking sessions in either dining facilities or the patient's own homes.
- (2) Owing to the cooperation from members of the 60-70-or-above age group, both infection and hospitalisation cases have decreased within the same age group. We remain a precarious position, however, since patients from this age group still account for a high percentage of hospitalisation cases, not to mention that the number of severe cases have been increasing gradually.

Following these premises, the prefecture requests that residents pay close attention to the following points:

- 1 The main cause of infection among younger patients can be attributed to

group dining and drinking sessions in either restaurants or homes. Consequently, residents in this age group should exercise extra caution when planning Christmas parties, countdown events, New Year parties and other similar events. In addition, we recommend looking out for the POP display ‘Reassurance is Appetising’ (*Anshin wa oishii* ‘安心はおいしい’) and choosing establishments that follow *Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19* when holding the abovementioned events. Always implement infection prevention measures such as wearing a mask during conversations, refraining from talking loudly, sitting diagonally opposite to each other, avoiding crowded, close-contact settings, dining in smaller groups, as well as reducing contact hours – note that the same suggestions also apply to house parties.

- 2 If you reside outside of Oita, ensure that you are in good physical condition before returning to the prefecture – refrain from travelling if you are feeling unwell. Adhere to “1” strictly and exercise extra precaution when dining with individuals who normally reside outside of Oita.
- 3 Pay close attention to trends occurring across different regions and act according to circumstances when travelling. In particular, exercise caution when travelling to and from areas that are experiencing higher number of cases, and avoid peak periods for *hatsumode* (i.e. first Shinto shrine visit of the Japanese New Year) and other New Year events.
- 4 During the headquarters’ meeting on Dec 8, we requested that residents follow the prefecture’s suggestions until the end of the year. However, in consideration of increased movement as people travel for homecoming visits and other purposes, as well as a rise in group dining opportunities, we implore that residents follow the abovementioned requests until the end of the New Year holiday (i.e. January 11, 2021).

Furthermore, the Oita Prefecture would like to remind residents to partake in the following actions:

- (1) Wash hands diligently, practice good cough etiquette and wear a mask correctly. Exercise social distancing, avoid the 3Cs and conduct basic infection control measures.
- (2) Ventilate indoor spaces frequently and maintain appropriate heating and humidity levels.  
(Rooms should ideally be heated to temperatures of 18°C or above, with humidity levels of 40% or higher)

If you feel unwell, contact your nearest health centre – a consultation and testing framework has been established in preparations for the New Year

period.

Although circumstances may be challenging, the Oita Prefecture would like to request for the ongoing understanding and support from all residents.