

# Free COVID tests, treatments for uninsured Americans cut for lack of funding

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Uninsured Americans will no longer be covered for free COVID-19 tests

and treatments because of the budget impasse in Congress, a Biden administration official said Tuesday.

The [program](#) was to stop accepting claims at midnight Tuesday, according to Martin Kramer, a spokesman for the Health Resources and Services Administration, the *Associated Press* reported.

"The lack of funding for COVID-19 needs is having real consequences," Kramer said in a statement. "We have begun an orderly shutdown of the program."

After April 5, the program will have to stop accepting claims for vaccination-related costs, Kramer warned.

The program, which reimburses hospitals, clinics, doctors and other service providers for COVID care for uninsured people, is a victim of the budget battle over Biden's request for an additional \$22.5 billion for an ongoing COVID response, the *AP* reported.

A [fact sheet](#) from the White House details further potential fallout from the lack of funding.

It says the government will not have enough money to provide [boosters](#) or vaccines targeting specific variants to all Americans, while the supply of [monoclonal antibody treatments](#) will be gone by late May. Additionally, certain treatments needed by patients with immune system problems could soon be hard to get, and continuing a robust [COVID testing](#) will be again become a challenge.

"COVID is a highly infectious disease, so we want people who think they might be sick to get tested and treated, not only for their health but for the community as well," Larry Levitt, a health policy expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, told the *AP*. "If uninsured people

now hesitate to get care because of the cost, we'll see more cases and greater inequity."

Another concern is that vaccine providers may reduce their [outreach efforts](#) to uninsured people, according to Levitt. There are about 28 million [uninsured people](#) in the United States, the *AP* reported.

COVID cases, hospitalizations and deaths are down dramatically across most of the country, but another surge may be on its way. The Omicron variant BA.2 is spreading in the United States, now accounting for nearly [35 percent of all cases](#). It's more transmissible than the original [Omicron variant](#), but does not appear to cause more [severe disease](#). Still, if cases continue to climb, an uptick in hospitalizations may well follow.

**More information:** Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [COVID tests](#).

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