

# Biden administration extends COVID public health emergency for 90 days

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America's public health emergency plan for COVID-19 will continue for

at least another 90 days, the Biden administration [announced](#) Wednesday.

Pushing the deadline to mid-July means that vulnerable Americans will keep getting the health care benefits the program offers.

The [emergency plan](#) has been in effect for over two years, during which time it has made it possible for people who may otherwise have lost [health coverage](#) to stay enrolled in Medicaid without the usual paperwork checks that would be required, even if their incomes had risen higher than that allowed, *The New York Times* reported. The program experienced [record levels of enrollment](#) during the pandemic.

The emergency declaration "has given us a tremendous sense of security in an otherwise very insecure and uncertain time," Juliette Cubanski, deputy director of the Kaiser Family Foundation who has researched and written about the effects of the public health emergency, told the *Times*.

"While we can't live in a state of public health emergency forever, there's still a bit of uncertainty about whether we are ready as a [health care system](#) to do without the flexibilities" it offers, Cubanski added.

Other benefits of the extension are that Medicare recipients continue to have expanded eligibility for telehealth appointments. During the pandemic, these have been critical for those who are older and more vulnerable to see doctors if they were concerned about the risk of infection or when offices were closed to in-person appointments.

"It's meant the ability to access care that otherwise would have been inaccessible," Cubanski said. Using telehealth, she added, has "kept people from serious health consequences that they might have otherwise suffered."

But [health care](#) institutions have also benefited from the program: Hospitals have received a 20% increase in Medicare payment rates for treating COVID-19 patients, the *Times* reported.

The extension also means that Medicare and private insurers will keep covering the cost of at-home virus tests.

Recent hospitalization rates have been the lowest than at any other time during the pandemic except for its earliest weeks, although cases are climbing again, particularly in [northeastern cities](#) like Philadelphia, New York City Washington, D.C.

The highly transmissible BA.2 subvariant of the [Omicron variant](#) is now dominant in the United States, accounting for 85.9% of new cases, [data](#) from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show.

On Tuesday, the United States was recording an average of more than 31,000 new cases daily, an increase of 8% in two weeks, the *Times* reported. That [number](#) is likely an undercount, since many Americans are now using at-home testing, which typically aren't reported to [health officials](#).

**More information:** The U.S. COVID website has more information on [COVID-19](#).

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