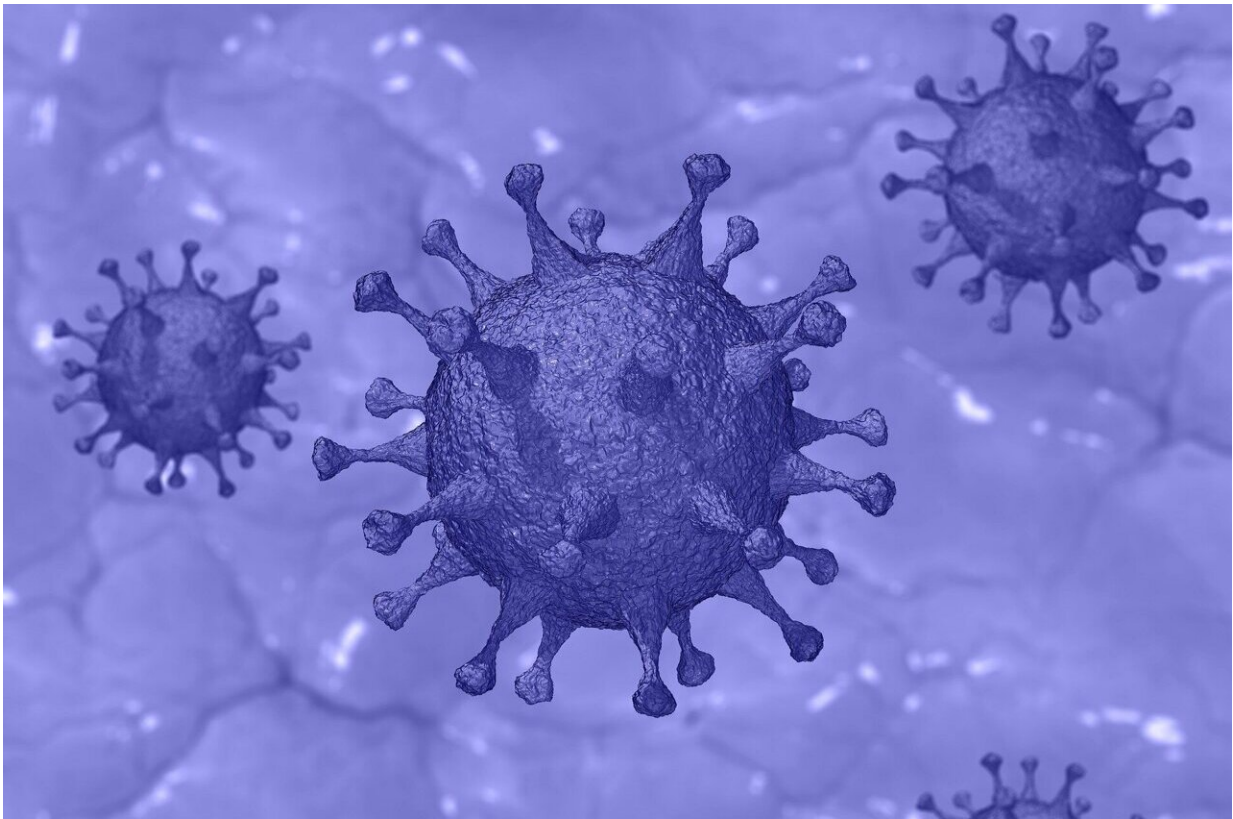


# U.S. extends COVID public health emergency another 3 months

July 18 2022

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

As the latest Omicron subvariant fuels climbing case counts in the United States, the Biden administration has [extended](#) the country's public health emergency status through mid-October.

Known as [BA.5](#), the subvariant is considered the most contagious to date, and officials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say they expect hospitalizations to increase.

CDC data shows that nearly [half of the country's population](#) lives in a county with a "high COVID-19 Community Level," where the [health care system](#) is at risk of becoming overburdened and indoor masking is recommended.

"The Public Health Emergency (PHE) declaration continues to provide us with tools and authorities needed to respond to the highly transmissible COVID-19 subvariants that are currently circulating around the country," a Biden administration official told *CNN*. "The PHE provides essential capabilities and flexibilities to hospitals to better care for patients, particularly if we were to see a significant increase in hospitalizations in the coming weeks."

The declaration also impacts the testing and treatments people can receive, which will end for some once the public health emergency is declared over.

Among those services are free COVID testing, treatments and vaccines. Vaccinations would generally continue to be free for those covered by Medicare and private insurance, according to *CNN*. Those enrolled in state Medicaid programs would have coverage decided on by their states.

During the health emergency, Medicare has offered more leniency with [telehealth](#) visits, not limiting them to those living in rural areas. Enrollees can now access more [healthcare services](#) without leaving home than they previously could.

Federal matching funds have also kept Medicaid residents from being involuntarily disenrolled during the health emergency. Up to 14 million

people could lose their Medicaid coverage after the emergency is declared over, both Kaiser and the Urban Institute have projected.

"Without the PHE in place, we would be limited in our ability to provide broad and equitable access to lifesaving treatments through our Test-to-Treat initiative, for example, which relies on flexibility for telehealth and operations," the HHS official told *CNN*. "Not renewing the PHE would leave us with fewer tools to respond and mean more Americans would get severely ill and end up in the hospital."

In some states, [low-income families](#) are also receiving enhanced food stamp benefits during the [public health emergency](#).

A separate emergency [declaration](#) allows for the emergency use authorization of testing, treatments and vaccines, *CNN* reported. Its end date will be determined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services with 60 days notice.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [COVID-19](#).

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