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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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End of the Public Health Emergency Declaration for COVID-19

TEMPLE - The COVID-19 National and Public Health Emergency (PHE) declarations end on May 11, 2023. This does not mean that COVID-19 is gone, but it does mean that some resources and services that were expanded or put in to place during the pandemic response are ending. There are many changes coming that may impact residents. Please review the resource provided by public health for detailed lists and information about these changes.

One of the most prominent changes affecting all residents will be the cost and access to COVID-19 testing, vaccines, and treatment. The availability, access, and cost of COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters, will not be impacted by the end of the PHE. As long as the federal government's supply of vaccines lasts, COVID-19 vaccines will remain free to all people regardless of insurance coverage. Once the federal supply of vaccines is depleted, vaccines will continue to be available and free for most people with private and public insurance. Coverage for COVID-19 testing and treatment will vary by insurance type; for people with Medicaid coverage, COVID-19 testing and treatment will remain covered at no cost through September 2024. COVID-19 testing and treatment will no longer be covered for those without insurance, and individual providers will determine the cost. However, free tests and treatment may be available at local free clinics or community health centers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 data surveillance has been the cornerstone of our response during the COVID-19 PHE; however, on May 11, 2023, local healthcare providers will no longer be required to send COVID-19 numbers to the local health department for tracking purposes in response to accuracy concerns with the release of COVID-19 home-tests.

In the coming days, the Bell County COVID-19 Dashboard will be removed from the Health District website as part of the end of the public health emergency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) plans to change the Community Level Metric to another yet-to-be-announced reporting measure. Until the CDC announces those changes, please continue to use the CDC current COVID-19 dashboard [CDC COVID Data Tracker: County View](#).

The end of the emergency declarations does not mean the virus is no longer a threat. The CDC continues to advise that everyone stay up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations, use at-home tests if they have been exposed or have symptoms, stay home if they are sick, and wear a high-quality mask when COVID-19 levels are high.

"These precautions are the best ways to continue to protect yourself and your loved ones against COVID-19," said Amy J. Yeager, Bell County Public Health District Director.

Although the public health emergency has ended, COVID-19 has not. The virus continues to exist and move in the population.

"The official end of the public health emergency symbolizes a new beginning, moving public health and the community into the Recovery phase," said Bell County Judge David Blackburn.

These changes also signal the one-year period of wrapping up the actual public health response with emergency funding ending in June 2024.

"This one-year transition helps all of us to shift from seeing COVID-19 as a pandemic emergency to accepting it as another disease in our community and monitoring and protecting ourselves against it as we do with many other diseases as we have gotten to know them over the years," stated Director Yeager.

"I am proud of efforts put forth by all of our public health, emergency management, healthcare workers, and our entire Bell County community to slow the spread of COVID-19," Judge Blackburn said.

For more information on the changes resulting from the end of Public Health Emergency Declaration, please visit:

[Fact Sheet: COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Transition Roadmap](#), Department of Health and Human Services.

[The End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency: Details on Health Coverage, Access](#), Kaiser Family Foundation.

[COVID-19 emergencies will end in May-What does this mean for you?](#), Public Good News.

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