COVID-19

Protection and Treatment

Beyond the

Public Health Emergency

Toolkit

THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

Pfizer

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CONTEXT

On May 11, 2023, the U.S. government announced the end of the formal Public Health Emergency (PHE) related to the COVID-19 pandemic.[1]

This end to the national emergency triggered several changes impacting COVID-19 testing, as well as changes to requirements of health insurers and may impact the broader use of telehealth services in some states, among others.[2]

However, the end of the Public Health Emergency did not change the FDA approval or authorization status of tests, vaccines, and treatments related to COVID-19.
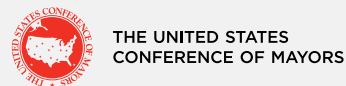
The end of the Public Health Emergency did not change the FDA approval or authorization status of tests, vaccines, and treatments

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit is a joint effort between The U.S. Conference of Mayors and Pfizer.

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PURPOSE

The *COVID-19 Protection and Treatment Beyond the Public Health Emergency* toolkit provides **mayors and their teams** with **information and resources** to help guide their municipalities through the **transition following the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.**

This toolkit also provides draft communications to share the latest information about where to find resources regarding COVID-19, particularly as schools are back in session and as we head into cold and flu season.

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HOW TO USE

Due to popular request, the templates in this toolkit are intended to help mayors, if deemed appropriate, to continue to stress the importance of continued COVID-19 testing and treatment to residents following the formal end of the Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023.

This toolkit features the following sample materials, which can be downloaded for use here:

Talking Points

For use during press conferences or inserted into news releases, media statements or Q&A around Public Health Emergency discussion. Talking points may also be woven into educational materials—such as memos, websites, brochures, or other collateral—that feature relevant information.

Sample Press Release

Starter content to use and adapt to make a formal announcement of the city's continued commitment to helping protect residents from COVID-19 through vaccination and helping treat those high risk patients who get COVID-19 to prevent progression to severe disease. The content included can be woven into additional media materials including statements and Q&As. The formal announcement could be posted to the newsroom online and shared directly with media.

Community Engagement Activations

Thought starters to continue providing the latest community resources for COVID-19 protection. Timing recommendations have been included with each activation, but are up to your own discretion.

Social Media Copy

Starter content to use/adapt for X (previously Twitter), Facebook, and LinkedIn. Posts should be timely around other formal announcements and/or initiatives the local administration undertakes. Timing recommendations have been included with each sample post.

Proclamation

A sample for use/modification to formally acknowledge a commitment to continuing to combat COVID-19, with the official signing amplified on social media and posted to the local newsroom.

Appendix

Starter content to use/adapt following the transition of certain treatment options to traditional insurance coverage to inform residents of access options, inclusive of timing recommendations, talking points, and social media copy.

SAMPLE TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

November 2023

Issue press release about the continued availability of COVID-19 resources as schools are back in session and the incidence of respiratory illnesses increases	Publish social posts about continued access to resources following the end of the Public Health Emergency	Use some of the talking points during any relevant interviews or media statements	Update city/mayoral website to include latest local COVID-19 resources
Host a roundtable discussion with public health and community leaders to discuss how the city continues to support COVID-19 education and awareness efforts, particularly in regards to cold and flu season	Foster a collaboration between the local health department and a local community organization to stand up an information table at select locations or organizational centers to share latest information on testing, prevention, and treatment options	Partner with local religious centers to invite the mayor or local health department representative to briefly speak about the continuation of COVID-19 resources during fellowship, what has and has not changed for availability of prevention, testing and treatment, and how attendees can access more information about COVID-19	

December 2023

Record and release a reminder PSA about the importance of testing for COVID-19 and treatment options amid the height of cold and flu season, amplifying the content throughout the entirety of fall and winter on social media	Bolster COVID-19-related communications efforts around holidays when many respiratory illnesses are transmitted (last week of November-end of December)	Declare "Testing and Treatment Awareness Week" via proclamation	Upon transition of certain treatments to traditional insurance coverage (TBD), share information such as FAQs about locations for testing and treatment
		Amplify awareness week on social media	

TALKING POINTS

The templates in this toolkit are intended to help mayors amplify the importance of continued COVID-19 testing and treatment to residents following the formal end of the Public Health Emergency on May 11, 2023.

- On May 11, more than three years since COVID-19 was designated as a pandemic, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared an end to the federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19. The PHE may have ended, but COVID-19 remains a public health threat.[3]

- Three years after the start of the pandemic, incredible progress in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 has been made, but it remains prevalent. COVID-19 continues to effect the nearly 75% of U.S. adults who have at least one risk factor that puts them at high risk of developing severe illness caused by COVID-19.[4]

- Over these past three years, we have put easy-to-use tools in place to help protect against the disease and educate people so they understand those at high risk may become severely ill from COVID-19.

- As a result of the end of the Public Health Emergency, there may have been changes to the availability of COVID-19 testing sites near you and the costs for these health services depending on your health insurance coverage.[2] The U.S. government has made additional at-home COVID-19 tests available by mail in Fall 2023 at no charge.[5]

Implications of the End of the Public Health Emergency

- Updated COVID-19 vaccines and treatments will continue to be made available.

- We will continue to work with *[Our Local Health Department]* to provide resources to you and ensure testing, prevention, and treatment options are readily available, particularly as schools are back in session and we head into cold and flu season.

Understanding Your Risk

- While the Public Health Emergency is over, COVID-19 remains a serious concern for the nearly 75% of American adults who have at least one risk factor that places them at high risk for getting very ill from COVID-19.[4]

- There are several factors that can put someone at increased risk of severe illness, including hospitalization from COVID-19. Having diabetes, being 50 or older, and having asthma are just some of the factors that can put you at high risk. Some others may surprise you—like being a current or former smoker, having depression, or being overweight.[6] For a complete list of risk factors see the CDC website.

- On top of personal and environmental risk factors, the winter season is ripe for transmissible respiratory illnesses.[7] It is important to take precautions as we head into cold and flu season and gather with friends and family for the holidays, as COVID-19 can easily spread among family members in close contact.[8]

- Don't wait until you experience COVID-19 symptoms or test positive. Make a plan with a healthcare professional now—making a plan before COVID-19 strikes is one of the most important steps you can take to help prevent illness from becoming severe and potentially requiring hospitalization.[9]

- If you feel sick or test positive, it's important to talk to your healthcare provider right away. The sooner you confirm that you have COVID-19, the sooner you may be able to start treating the virus. The virus multiplies quickly in your body, and you may infect others without realizing.

- Prescription treatment options are available for appropriate patients who have high risk factors that could cause their COVID-19 to become severe, even if their symptoms start out mild.

- If you're high risk and a healthcare professional has determined that treatment is right for you, remember that treatment must be started within a few days of your first symptoms.[9]

- It is also important to test for COVID-19 to avoid spreading the illness to loved ones during the holidays, particularly for those of us who have friends and family at higher risk.[10]

- You can find your nearest testing center at *[Local Health Department Website].*

- Check with your health insurance company or employer regarding the availability of COVID-19 tests at no charge. The U.S. government has also made additional no charge at-home COVID-19 tests available by mail in Fall 2023.[5]

- More information about COVID-19 and how to find testing locations can be found at *[Local Health Department Website].*

Testing & Treatment

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

Mayor *[Name]*'s Statement on Community Commitment Following Formal End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

[Date] – In May, the U.S. government declared the end of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE). As a city, we have worked together over the past three years to help protect ourselves against COVID-19 and combat the virus through remarkable scientific advancements.

While the formal Public Health Emergency has come to an end, my office is committed to ensuring that all residents continue to have the information and resources to help protect themselves and those they take care of.

Since March, 2020, *[city]* has provided residents with:
- More than *[number]* free masks
- More than *[number]* doses of COVID-19 vaccines
- More than *[number]* COVID-19 testing kits

With schools back in session and cold and flu season around the corner, the people of *[City]* must continue to work together to combat COVID-19 through appropriate prevention, testing measures, and treatment.

Although the U.S. government has made additional at-home COVID-19 tests available by mail at no charge, due to the official end of the Public Health Emergency, residents may experience changes in how to access and pay for COVID-19 testing.[5] Our team at the *[Local City/County Health Department/Clinics]* is prepared to support the community in addressing questions and directing residents to convenient resources for testing.
- For residents who test positive for COVID-19 and who are at high risk for getting very sick — such as those aged 50 or older or with a medical condition such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, or are overweight or smoke — it is important to contact a doctor or visit a local health clinic quickly.

For more information on where to find resources on COVID-19 prevention, testing, and treatment, visit:
- cdc.gov/coronavirus
- covid.gov/tests
- *[State/Local Link]*

###

MEDIA CONTACT:
[Name and Email Address]

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES

1 Roundtable with Local Leaders

Invite influential community voices to join the mayor in conversation about the changes that occurred at the end of the Public Health Emergency, including coverage changes for COVID-19, how to access free preventative health services and affordable tests, and provide education around treatments options.

WHO • Mayor, business leader, religious leader, physician, health department official, city council representative, etc.

WHEN • November

CHANNEL • In-person event with business leaders and key constituents, amplified on social media

COLLATERAL • Talking points, fact sheet

2 Information Booth at Community-Based Organization

Foster a collaboration between the local health department and a local organization to stand up an information booth at select organization-owned locations to inform about the post-Public Health Emergency landscape and how individuals can continue to access COVID-19 resources. The information booth could be timed with school orientations, community food drives, or following exercise classes if partnering with an organization like the YMCA. Provide talking points for the local health department representative and educational takeaways with information about local prevention, testing, and treatment options. The National Association of Community Health Centers and state departments of health have examples for and resources to support community partnerships.

WHO • Health department, local organization

WHEN • November

CHANNEL • In-person, amplified on social media (see example 1 below under Social Media Post Copy)

COLLATERAL • Talking points, fact sheet

3 Church Town Hall

Partner with local religious centers to invite the mayor or local health department representative to speak briefly during fellowship or related informal gathering about how attendees can access more information about COVID-19.

WHO • Mayor/Health department representative, local religious leaders

WHEN • November

CHANNEL • In-person, amplify on social media

COLLATERAL • Talking points, fact sheet

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES

4 **Update Website;
Share on Social Media**

Update any publicly available COVID-19-related resources on your city's website with the latest information pertaining to how residents can get information and resources on COVID-19. Include information regarding preventative services, the availability of testing centers, the importance of testing and treatment options for COVID-19, and links from the CDC/NIH, as may be relevant. Remind residents to check with their employer or health insurance company to understand coverage or costs related to COVID-19 tests as well as at-home tests available by mail from the U.S. government at no charge.[5]

SEE EXAMPLE 2 UNDER SOCIAL MEDIA POST COPY

5 **Media Relations**

Offer local news interviews ahead of the fall school session, at the start of cold and flu season, and/or prior to key holiday events within your community (i.e., Thanksgiving, Christmas). Consider working with provider and/or pharmacy partners to discuss the importance of prevention, testing, and treatment.

WHEN • November–December

COLLATERAL • Talking points, fact sheet

6 **Testing and Treatment Awareness Week**

Collaborate with local health service centers to encourage awareness around the importance of prevention, testing, and treatment for COVID-19. Consider offering resources, financial incentives, or pop-up locations to further amplify awareness.

WHEN • December (timing of awareness week up to your discretion)

SEE EXAMPLE 3 UNDER SOCIAL MEDIA POST COPY

7 **Recorded PSA**

Have the mayor or a key public health official record a short public service announcement on the importance of continuing to be vigilant about prevention, testing, and understanding of treatment options for COVID-19. A phone recording is recommended to allow for a quick upload to social channels.

WHO • Mayor

WHEN • November

CHANNEL • Social Media

SOCIAL MEDIA POST COPY WITH TIMING RECOMMENDATION

Example #1   **Information Booth Announcement in Partnership with Community Organization**
Timing recommendation: November 2023

X / Twitter

HAPPENING NOW: *[@Local Health Department Handle]* is at *[@Community Organization Handle]*'s *[Descriptor]* location to answer questions about #COVID19 prevention, testing, and treatment.

Stop by until *[time]*! Learn more at *[Link]*.

A joint effort between the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Pfizer.

Facebook

This month, *[@Local Health Department Handle]* is teaming up with *[@Community Organization Handle]* to answer your questions about #COVID19, including what changed with the end of the #PublicHealthEmergency.

If you're interested in learning more about the importance of early testing, getting help finding your nearest testing center, or having your questions answered about treatment options, visit us during any of the following dates/times listed below!

You can also get more information at *[Link]*.

[Insert location, date, and time information. EX: May 15: Downtown YMCA from 3p – 6p]

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We're grateful to *[@Community Organization Handle]* for hosting *[@Local Health Department]* to answer our community's #COVID19 questions. All month long, a representative from our local health department will be visiting *[organization]*'s locations across *[City]* to discuss the importance of early testing, help residents find their nearest testing center, and answer questions about treatment options.

Visit *[Link]* for more information.

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SOCIAL MEDIA POST COPY WITH TIMING RECOMMENDATION

Example #2

End of Public Health Emergency update; introduce COVID-19 resource link
Timing recommendation: November 2023

Example #3

Testing and Treatment Awareness Week
Timing recommendation: 1–2 weeks prior to designated awareness week

X / Twitter

Although the #COVID19 #PublicHealthEmergency has officially ended, *[@City Handle]* remains dedicated to providing resources that help you stay healthy. Visit *[Link]* to learn more about COVID-19, changes to testing sites, and ways to help protect yourself.

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Facebook

[City], in partnership with *[@Local Health Department]*, will continue to keep residents informed about #COVID19 despite the end of the official #PublicHealthEmergency.

We have been working to ensure affordable testing options remain available across *[City/Region]*. The U.S. government continues to provide certain treatment options at no charge though administrative and other fees may apply. Learn more about your potential risk factors and what you can do to help protect yourself at *[Link]*.

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Although the #COVID19 #PublicHealthEmergency officially ended in May, *[@Mayor Handle]* and *[@City Handle]* have partnered with *[@Local Health Department]* to continue to provide residents with up-to-date information about COVID-19, changes to testing sites, treatments, and ways to help protect yourself.

Learn more at *[Link]*.

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X / Twitter

REMINDER: *[@City Handle]* has *[##]* locations across *[City/Region]* to help prevent, test for, or treat #COVID19. Join us during #TestAndTreatAwarenessWeek *[Dates]* and find your nearest testing center to learn more about how to help protect yourself.

[Link]

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Facebook

Testing for COVID-19 saves lives.

[@City Handle] is designating *[Dates]* as #TestAndTreatAwarenessWeek to encourage *[City]* residents and families to get tested to help protect high-risk loved ones and community members from severe illness. Join us in helping build a healthier community!

Learn where your nearest testing center is at *[Link]*.

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LinkedIn

Today, *[@Mayor Handle]* declared *[Dates]* as #TestAndTreatAwarenessWeek to encourage early testing and treatment for COVID-19 to help protect high-risk loved ones and community members from severe illness.

With more than *[##]* locations across *[City/Region]*, we invite *[City]* residents and families to find their nearest testing center and join us in getting tested.

Visit *[Link]* to learn more about the importance of early testing, find your nearest testing center, or read about the treatment options available if you begin experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

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SOCIAL MEDIA POST COPY WITH TIMING RECOMMENDATION

Example #4 | **Flu vs. COVID-19 symptoms; testing and treatment reminder**
Timing recommendation: as flu season begins

X / Twitter

Cooler weather is around the corner! Learn the difference between #COVID19 and #flu symptoms by visiting www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm.

*Suggest replacing link with Bitly link when sharing on social media

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Facebook

As the weather gets colder, know the difference between #COVID19 and #flu symptoms to better protect your health and the health of your loved ones. Learn more at www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm.

Consider early testing and treatment if you experience symptoms that may be associated with COVID-19 to help protect high risk loved ones this cold weather season.

*Suggest replacing link with Bitly link when sharing on social media

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Like   Comment   Share

LinkedIn

Cooler weather can increase the chances of getting sick. Know the difference between #COVID19 and #flu symptoms this season to better protect your health and the health of your loved ones.

Learn more at www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms/flu-vs-covid19.htm and consider early testing and treatment if you experience COVID-19 symptoms to help protect high risk loved ones this cold weather season.

*Suggest replacing link with Bitly link when sharing on social media

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SAMPLE PROCLAMATION

Issuing a proclamation that highlights your continued commitment to testing and treatment for COVID-19 as part of your post-Public Health Emergency is another helpful tool to educate residents and promote public health.

This sample can be modified to serve as an acknowledgement of the continuing commitment of your city to keep constituents safe, or as recognition of healthcare professionals who provide testing and treatment.

PROCLAMATION

COVID-19 Testing and Treatment Week

WHEREAS, in the United States, more than 104 million people have been diagnosed with COVID-19 since 2020;[11] and

WHEREAS, as of May 2023, more than 1.1 million people in the United States have lost their lives to this virus;[11] and

WHEREAS, over 1 billion total COVID-19 test results have been reported by the CDC;[12] and

WHEREAS, treatment options for COVID-19 are available;[13] and

WHEREAS, our city is committed to ensuring its citizens have equitable and affordable access to resources, testing, and treatment for COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, residents of our city are encouraged to take part in our effort to keep our community safe and healthy through awareness, testing, and treatment for COVID-19.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, *[Name]*, *[Title]*, do hereby proclaim ***[week]*** as

COVID-19 TESTING AND TREATMENT WEEK

[Name]
[Title]

The Public Health Emergency officially ended on May 11, 2023, which could mean changes to your COVID-19 action plan, including where you can get tested and treated.[1]

Learn More About COVID-19 Testing and Treatment

1. **How could I be impacted by the end of the Public Health Emergency?**
   There may be changes to the availability of COVID-19 testing sites near you, and you could have to pay some or all of the costs for these health services depending on your health insurance coverage. Coverage of some treatments may default to traditional insurance coverage. If this occurs, any patient out-of-pocket responsibility for such treatment will vary based on a patient's insurance coverage.[1]

2. **Is COVID still a public health threat?**
   COVID-19 hasn't gone away, and case rates continue to fluctuate. It's important to know if you're at high risk for getting very ill from COVID-19 so you can act quickly to protect yourself and those around you if you get COVID-19.

3. **What should I do if I experience symptoms?**
   If you have COVID-19 symptoms (even mild), go get tested right away, and talk to your healthcare provider as soon as possible to help determine if you are at high risk for severe illness and treatment is right for you. Remember that treatment must be started within a few days of your first symptoms.

4. **What are my options now if I test positive for COVID-19?**
   If you have a confirmed diagnosis for severe COVID-19 and are at high risk for severe illness, immediately speak to your healthcare provider to discuss if you are an appropriate candidate for available treatment options. Treatment options are available for people diagnosed with COVID-19, including for people with mild-to-moderate symptoms who are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19 (including hospitalization or death).

5. **Why might I have to pay for a COVID-19 test?**
   The end of the Public Health Emergency sunset a federal rule requiring insurance plans to cover the cost of up to 8 at-home COVID-19 tests per month. While tests may still be readily available, insurers may now require copays or deductibles. Health insurance plans may still choose to cover COVID-19 at-home tests at no charge.[1] The U.S. government made additional at-home COVID-19 tests available by mail in Fall 2023 at no charge.[5]

6. **Will I have to pay for COVID-19 treatments?**
   The U.S. government has purchased certain treatments from pharmaceutical companies and is currently making them available to patients at no charge, though patients may need to pay a fee for the doctor's office visit and/or administrative fees at the pharmacy. Upon the transition of certain treatments to payment through traditional insurance channels, a patient's coverage, reimbursement, and out-of-pocket responsibility will vary based on the patient's insurance coverage.[1]

For more information on where to find resources on COVID-19 prevention, testing, and treatment, visit:
- cdc.gov/coronavirus
- covid.gov/tests
- *[Local Link]*

Treatment Options Transition to Traditional Insurance Coverage

SAMPLE TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES

Fall 2023	Upon the transition of certain treatments to traditional insurance coverage (Fall 2023 TBD), share information about access, such as FAQs about insurance coverage and locations for continued testing and treatment.

TALKING POINTS

Testing & Treatment

- When certain treatment options transition from the U.S. government bulk-purchasing to the traditional insurance model, treatments will be sold and reimbursed through traditional channels, where coverage, reimbursement and patient out-of-pocket responsibility will vary based on a patient's insurance coverage.[1]

- It is important that our residents, particularly those at higher risk, understand their treatment options *before* getting sick with COVID-19.[9] Our office is committed to keeping the community apprised of the latest information related to COVID-19 prevention, testing, and treatment so you can prepare appropriately.

APPENDIX

Certain Treatment Options Transition to Traditional Insurance Coverage

Example #5	**Transition of Certain Treatment Options to Traditional Insurance Coverage**
	Timing recommendation: after transition to traditional insurance coverage, Fall 2023 TBD

X / Twitter

Though the federal #PublicHealthEmergency has ended, treatment remains an important and effective tool to mitigate the impacts of #COVID19. Learn how you can continue to access treatment: [Link]

A joint effort between the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Pfizer.

Facebook

Do you know your treatment options for #COVID19?

The federal #PublicHealthEmergency has officially ended, but COVID-19 is still here. It's important to know your options to prevent, test, and treat COVID-19 as we enter the height of cold and flu season.

Visit [link] to find out how you can access treatment through insurance or patient assistance programs.

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[@Mayor Handle] remains committed to our city's health and safety as we navigate the post-#PublicHealthEmergency landscape. Visit [City's] website here [link] to learn how you can mitigate the effects of #COVID19 with treatment, along with information on how to access treatment.

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