



End of the COVID-19 public health emergency: Suggested talking points

- **Free COVID-19 tests are now harder to find, but testing remains important.**
 - People with private insurance are no longer guaranteed free at-home tests, but some insurers may choose to continue covering the tests. People with private insurance may also start facing cost-sharing for lab PCR tests.
 - People on Medicare will no longer get free at-home tests, except for those on Medicare Advantage, which may continue to cover them. Traditional Medicare plans will still cover lab PCR tests without cost-sharing when ordered by a physician or certain other healthcare providers.
 - People on Medicaid will get at-home tests and lab PCR tests covered without cost-sharing through September 2024.
 - You may be able to find free or low-cost at-home tests at health clinics, community health centers, public health departments, or other local organizations.
- **COVID-19 vaccines and treatments remain free for all for the near future.**
 - COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be free for people without insurance [through at least September 2024](#).
 - The antiviral Paxlovid will remain free for people with or without insurance as long as there's a federal stockpile, which is expected to last for months.
 - Once the stockpile is gone, people with private insurance may have to pay for Paxlovid depending on their health insurance.
 - People on Medicare will continue to get Paxlovid and other FDA-authorized treatments covered, but they may face cost-sharing.
 - People on Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program will be able to get all COVID-19 treatments for free without cost-sharing through September 2024.
- **Some telemedicine flexibilities are being extended, while others are not.**
 - Telehealth services for people on Medicare will remain covered through 2024. Telehealth services for people on Medicaid were often already covered before the pandemic and will continue to be covered after May 11.
 - Telehealth services through apps like FaceTime and WhatsApp will no longer be allowed.
 - Health care providers will continue to be able to prescribe controlled medications (such as Adderall and buprenorphine) via telemedicine without an in-person interaction through November 11, 2023.



End of the COVID-19 public health emergency: Frequently asked questions

1. How will the end of the public health emergency affect me?

The most immediate effect is the end of free at-home tests. Now, only people on Medicaid are guaranteed at-home tests and lab PCR tests at no cost (but only through September 2024). People with other forms of insurance may still be able to get free tests depending on what their plan decides. COVID-19 vaccines will continue to be free for people with or without insurance through at least 2024. The antiviral Paxlovid will also remain free for everyone as long as there's a federal stockpile, which is expected to last for months. Once the stockpile is gone, patients will start to face more costs, but those on Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program will continue to get all COVID-19 treatments for free through September 2024.

2. Does the end of the World Health Organization's global public health emergency mean that COVID-19 is over?

No. While the end of WHO's global public health emergency is a huge victory, it is not a declaration that COVID-19 is over as a global health threat. The end of the emergency means that international collaboration or funding efforts for COVID-19 are no longer necessary. The decision also suggests that WHO believes a more dangerous COVID-19 variant is unlikely to emerge in the coming months. But it does not mean that the pandemic is over nor that COVID-19 is gone.

3. How should I deal with COVID-19 going forward?

We are no longer in an emergency phase of COVID-19, which should ease anxiety around the virus. But COVID-19 is still around and here to stay. Going forward, it's important to continue [staying up to date on COVID-19 vaccines](#) and taking advantage of tests and treatments in order to prevent transmission and severe disease. It can also be helpful to keep track of the virus's spread in your region so you can mask up ahead of a significant wave or a new variant. Unfortunately, the end of the public health emergency means that a lot of these tools and resources will no longer be as easily accessible as they were during the emergency. But vaccines and Paxlovid remain free for everyone for now. Free or low-cost tests may be available at health clinics or community health centers. And COVID-19 hospitalization and wastewater surveillance data are [good ways to track community spread](#).