

Mayor's Message (April 26th 2021)

Hello. I'm FUSHIMI Takashi, Mayor of Hirakata City.

Novel coronavirus infections are rapidly spreading again. Hence, the 3rd declaration of state of emergency has been issued to four prefectures including Osaka on April 25th. The declaration is in effect until May 11th for 17 days.

Osaka is facing a quite severe situation in which the number of new corona cases is more than 1000 cases every day. Consequently, overwhelmed medical care nearly reaches a limit. The occupancy rate of hospital bed for severe corona patients is now over 100%. As a result, some of them are forced to receive medical care at hospitals for moderate severe patients. The occupancy rate of hospital bed for mild or moderate cases is also over 80%. Hirakata City Hospital that is one of the hospitals accepting corona patients has increased the number of beds. But the occupancy rate is almost 100%.

In order to respond to the declaration, Osaka Prefectural Government is strongly asking all people of Osaka to abstain from unnecessary and nonurgent outings, and to stop moving beyond prefectural borders. In addition, the prefectural government is also asking for temporary closing pubs serving alcohols and Karaoke and large-scale commercial facilities, and holding events with no audience.

“The 4th spike” of rapid spread of COVID-19 should be ended within the declaration period. In so doing, Hirakata also needs to take any actions with Osaka Prefectural Government that is asking for “refraining from unnecessary and nonurgent outings”. I would like to inform you that Hirakata City Hall has decided to shut down city facilities and to stop holding any city events from today (April 26th).

These measures were lifted in March. Therefore, I know very well that this announcement may disappoint you and that you may think “again”. However, the more infectious coronavirus variants are becoming a new major threat causing overwhelmed hospitals. We should know that our past anti-coronavirus measures may not be effective to curb those variants.

In Hirakata, there were cases in which patients had to wait in ambulances for a long time because acceptable hospitals could not be found. In the end, the patients were returned to their homes or care facilities. The number of patients who should receive medical care not at

hospitals but at their homes or care facilities is increasing. In addition, the Hirakata's health centre is caught in a vicious circle in which its staff members cannot carry on smooth investigations and supports for infected patients due to the rapid rise of new corona cases. Please imagine that, if infected with COVID-19 and became fatal in this circumstance, you may not be able to receive proper medical care and that your family and friends may be exposed to the infectious risk because of you. Stopping "unnecessary and nonurgent outings" is one of major measures we should carry out in order not to realise the worst scenario in which many preventable deaths cannot be saved.

In the end, I would like to talk about vaccinations against COVID-19 infections. Hirakata has already sent citizens aged 65 or over corona vaccination tickets. The application starts from May 7th (Fri.) after Golden Week holidays. Vaccinations begin from May 17th. We will inform you about the details of the vaccinations in the May issue of a city monthly magazine (Koho Hirakata) delivered in the end of April and in our website.

Vaccination is one of "the trump cards" to protect our lives from a threat of COVID-19. We are making full efforts to get ready for safe and smooth vaccinations. On the other hand, there is more important thing than the vaccinations. We should build a new life habit to prevent the spread of infectious diseases by understanding our respective roles to protect our lives. I hope to share this idea with your family, friends, and neighbours.

The Golden Week holidays will be patient holidays for you. We are doing our utmost to save lives of 400 thousand citizens. I hope that all citizens cooperate with each other to overcome this daunting situation.

FUSHIMI Takashi
Mayor of Hirakata City