

Mayor's Message on "Semi-emergency Coronavirus Spread Prevention Measures"

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

The number of new corona cases is drastically increasing from the beginning of this year. The Semi-emergency Coronavirus Spread Prevention Measures was issued to the Kansai's three prefectures including Osaka on January 27th. Osaka Prefectural Government asked restaurants and bars to refrain selling alcohols and to shorten their business hours. The people of Osaka were also asked to avoid congestion and stop unnecessary outings. Those measures will be in effect until February 20th (25 days).

It is thought that the surge of the new corona cases is being caused by the very infectable "Omicron variant". Consequently, Hirakata Health Centre becomes nearly overwhelmed because many epidemiological investigations and health checks are required for increasing corona patients. In Hirakata, the number of current corona cases is about 2500 that is more than double of the fifth spike. It is still increasing. For the sixth spike, Hirakata Health Centre attempted to improve her performance by deploying more staff than the fifth spike. However, the centre considerably delays to contact the corona patients due to that fact that the infectious speed is much faster than our expectation.

To defuse this situation, Osaka Prefectural Government decided to prioritise health checks for the corona patients who have a higher risk of severe symptoms than others. In addition, the prefectural government decided to mitigate some burdens of Osaka's health centres by asking for self-investigations and self-tests for COVID-19 to companies and schools where corona cases are confirmed. To reduce severe corona patients, Hirakata Health Centre will carry out her duties along the decisions by the Osaka Prefectural Government. The reason why those decisions were made was that the severe rate of the Omicron variant was thought to be lower than other variants. However, if the number of Omicron cases increases, that of hospitalised patients consequently rises. If the occupancy rate of hospital bed is more than 50%, the Osaka's original corona alert turns red. In such a case, the non-corona patients who need hospitalisation or medical treatment will be badly affected.

Booster shots are thought to be effective to decrease the risk of severe corona symptoms. Hence, we accelerated our vaccination schedule for the citizens who want to get the booster shots as soon as possible. A vaccination ticket will be sent to you in six months after the second vaccination. Please be patient until it comes.

In the special additional benefit scheme for children aged 0 to 18, if one of rearers who are nurturing the children gets a higher annual income than the income limit determined by the central government, the benefit is not paid. Furthermore, there are persons who are not able to receive it due to a divorce. Therefore, Hirakata will pay 100,000 yen not only to those people but also to pregnant women who will have to pay full attention to infection controls for their babies.

The corona infections are broadly spreading to kindergartens, nursery schools, primary schools, and junior high schools. Your children and you may have a fear of attending school. Therefore, the Hirakata's primary and junior high schools have re-introduced hybrid lessons in which students can study at a class room or through online. In addition, we are doing all we can to continuously provide public childcare services that play an essential role for social functions. On the other hand, I know that we are giving the parents inconvenience because a lot of city facilities are temporally closed. Please understand that we are forced to manage our facilities in severe situations.

To avoid the rapidly spreading Omicron variant, I would like to ask you to continue basic anti-infectious activities such as wearing a face mask, washing your hands, and keeping physical distancing. I also would like to call for your cooperation not to increase the number of new corona cases. Let's move forward beyond the sixth spike by taking anti-infectious actions based on the notion "We are not infected with COVID-19. We do not pass it to anyone".

January 28th 2022

FUSHIMI Takashi
Mayor of Hirakata City