

**Q & A for Parents**  
**March 12, 2023**

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION-PLEASE READ**  
**Communication #1-Stay tuned for updates**

**The End of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19: What does that mean for me and my family?**

On January 30, 2023, the White House announced its plans to end the coronavirus public health emergency (PHE) in May. The PHE is scheduled to end on May 11, which will result in changes that will affect the access and cost to vaccines, tests, and treatment for COVID-19. This will include changes to telehealth policies.

During the pandemic, many of you received COVID tests, vaccines and treatments free of charge. When the emergency period ends on May 11, changes will occur on the availability and cost of the above. The White House did not want to end the PHE quickly and has given both patients and providers several months' notice to learn more about the upcoming changes.

Below is information to help guide you during this transition. This will likely be the first of several announcements as information changes and/or is updated. We will notify you as soon as we know more.

**Q: Does the end of the PHE mean that the pandemic is over? Do I still need to worry about COVID?**

**A:** No, it does not. How science defines a pandemic and how a government defines one are not necessarily the same.

According to the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, daily cases have decreased. Hospitalizations and deaths have also decreased, but children and adults are still getting COVID, and it remains a public health issue. At this time, COVID is not interfering with our lives like it did at the start because many people have some protection from COVID, either through vaccination or from previously having COVID.

**Vaccines continue to be the most reliable way to protect you and your child from getting this virus.** If your child has not been vaccinated, and you want your child vaccinated, please call your provider to schedule this appointment. If your child missed any other shots over the last three years, you could schedule those at the same time.

Also, if your child has been around someone with COVID or is showing signs of COVID, please contact your provider for testing guidance.

**Q: How does the Food and Drug Administration play into this change? Does this also mean the emergency use authorization for vaccines by the FDA goes away?**

**A:** No. The emergency use authorization for both vaccines and boosters will remain in effect. The EUA is not connected to the public health emergency that ends in May.

**Q: What will change for me and my family after May 11 when it comes to getting COVID vaccinations or boosters for my child?**

**A:** As long as federally funded vaccines are available, the cost of the vaccines, including boosters, will remain free to everyone, regardless of healthcare coverage.

Most physicians charge an administration fee which covers the process of measuring and administering the vaccine, counseling the parent on potential side effects, answering questions, reviewing the vaccine information sheet, etc. This administrative fee has always been billed to the insurance company. At this time, we do not know

if insurance will continue to cover the administrative fee after the end of the PHE. Also, no one knows how long the supply of federally funded vaccines will last.

**Q: Can my pediatrician charge me for those vaccines after May 2023?**

**A:** Again, as long as the federally purchased vaccines are available, there is **no charge**. This may not include an administration fee.

Please note: "[Providers of federally purchased vaccines](#) are not allowed to charge patients or deny vaccines based on insurance coverage or network status."

- Even **after the federally purchased vaccine supply is gone, vaccines will continue to be free for most individuals with private or public insurance. You may need to confirm with your insurance plan that vaccines are covered after the supply is gone. However, even if covered, you may still need to make a co-pay or deductible for the vaccine.** If you have private insurance please confirm that your provider is in network.
- If you are **uninsured or underinsured**, there will be **new costs** for vaccines after the federally purchased supply is gone. **You may still be able to get vaccines at a free clinic, community health center, or local health department at no cost or for a very small fee.**

**Q: I like to use at-home-tests for my children if I suspect COVID. What changes will occur with at-home COVID tests?**

**A:** After May 11 the at-home tests for COVID will not be free. You may have to make a co-pay or apply the cost to your deductible.

- For those **on Medicaid, at-home tests will be covered at no-cost through September 2024. After that date, costs for at-home tests will vary by state.**
- **If you want to have a supply on hand, you may want to visit your local pharmacy and pick up some tests before May 11. Be sure to look at the expiration dates on any tests you purchase.**

**Q: I don't have any insurance coverage for my children, but they received temporary Medicaid coverage during the pandemic. How does the end of the PHE affect them?**

**A:** There were 15 states in the U.S. that adopted a process of providing temporary Medicaid, and those who received temporary Medicaid coverage during the pandemic were able to receive testing services, including at-home testing, free of charge. Temporary Medicaid will end soon, depending on the state.

If you are uninsured, or cannot afford at-home tests, you may still be able to find them at a free clinic, community health center, health department, library, or other local organization.

***\*Please see below about the process for applying for continued Medicaid after the end of the PHE.***

**Q: What about a PCR or rapid COVID test ordered by the pediatrician or other health care provider?**

**A:** Most individuals with insurance will still have coverage for tests ordered by the health care provider, **but these tests may no longer be free. You may have to make a co-pay at time of testing or apply the cost to your deductible.**

Again, **those with Medicaid will be able to have a COVID test at no charge through September 2024.** However, some states may limit the number of tests allowed, or they may charge you a small fee for the test.

If you were **uninsured and issued temporary Medicaid coverage during the pandemic, you will not be able to obtain FREE COVID testing, including at-home testing, after the public health emergency ends, unless you re-apply and are approved for Medicaid.** You will need to pay full price for testing or find a public clinic or community health center offering free testing if you are uninsured.

**Q: Will I be required to pay for treatment once the public health emergency ends?**

**A: If your child is on Medicaid or CHIP, prescribed pharmaceutical treatments will continue to be covered through September 2024.** After that, those treatments will continue to be covered, however, some states may place a limit on the number of treatments that can be given. You may be responsible for some of the cost.

The limits or amount of the shared cost have not been decided at this point.

For those with insurance, there has always been a cost-sharing for COVID treatments provided in a hospital or outpatient setting. This will not change. You will still be responsible for a shared cost which will be dependent on your insurance plan.

**Q: When will the supply of federally purchased vaccines, tests, and treatments be gone?**

**A:** No one knows when that will happen. When it does, there may be further changes announced related to availability and cost. The White House has said that it does not plan to fund more vaccines, tests or treatments at this time.

**Q: Will telehealth visits still be allowed for COVID after the end of the public health emergency ends?**

**A:** Many providers saw patients for telehealth visits during the pandemic, and most states have already made plans to make Medicaid telehealth flexibilities a permanent part of a practice's service. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, recent legislation will allow telehealth policies adopted during the pandemic to remain through December 31, 2024.

- Most private insurances covered telehealth visits prior to the pandemic, and which most likely will remain the same with a few exceptions.
- For Medicaid, states have a greater ability to authorize coverage for telehealth visits without federal approval.

**Q: Will my child still be able to receive a prescription via a telehealth visit after the end of the PHE?**

**A:** As of February 24, the federal government is proposing some restrictions on telehealth prescriptions for some drugs, if the provider has not seen the patient in-person. This may include prescriptions for attention deficit disorder, addictive painkillers, or prescriptions prescribed for mental/behavioral health problems.

Currently, the proposed new rule would require a patient to see a provider at least once in-person to get a prescription for these types of medications.

If your child was prescribed a medication via telehealth during the pandemic, your child must see a provider within 180 days after the end of the public health emergency to receive a refill.

Patients will still be able to get medications such as refills, insulin, and skin creams through a telehealth visit.

A decision has not been made about whether a patient can be seen via telehealth when out-of-state, which was allowed during the pandemic. This could affect a child who is on vacation and becomes ill, or a college student attending an out of state university.

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** is working with the **Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)** to make sure that children and teens are not left out of the discussion about these changes.

By May 11 approaches, we should know more about the future of telehealth visits-its continued expansion, well as the limitations. Stay tuned for more information about this very important healthcare option.

**If your child is on Medicaid or Peach care for Kids, please review the following information carefully.**

**Q: I received temporary Medicaid enrollment for my child during the pandemic. Is that going to end?**

**A:** Continuous enrollment in temporary Medicaid was tied to the end of the public health emergency but will end on March 31, 2023. Recent legislation has allowed states to begin disenrolling patients as early as April 1, 2023.

**Most states will take approximately one year to complete this process of disenrolling individuals. This is referred to as Medicaid Unwinding or Medicaid Redetermination.**

**The state of Georgia will begin the Medicaid Redetermination process on April 1, 2023. This includes all children currently on Medicaid and Peachcare for Kids.**

It is extremely important for you to make sure your information is up to date with the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) . If you have not created an account in Gateway, please visit [www.gateway.ga.gov](http://www.gateway.ga.gov) and create your account.

Be sure to update all information including the following: (Available in English and Spanish)

- Name
- Phone number
- Job or income
- Number of people in the household

DHS encourages you to select “email” notifications which is the easiest way for them to reach you.

DHS has also created a website that will post current news and information about Medicaid. Go to [www.staycovered.ga.gov](http://www.staycovered.ga.gov) to stay informed.

You may also call 877-423-4746 for more information on Medicaid. Please pay attention to any communications you may receive from the Department of Human Services and CMS.

*Resources:*

[www.staycovered.ga.gov](http://www.staycovered.ga.gov) (In English and Spanish)

[www.gateway.ga.gov](http://www.gateway.ga.gov)

*Sources:*

<https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/unwinding-the-continuous-enrollment-provision-perspectives-from-current-medicaid-enrollees/>

<https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/the-end-of-the-covid-19-public-health-emergency-details-on-health-coverage-and-access/>

[Here's What the End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Could Mean for Federal Agencies](#) (Government Executive)

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

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

[U.S. Plans to End Public Health Emergency for COVID in May](#) (The New York Times)