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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Some COVID services will change when emergency declarations end Thursday

Community should expect some changes in access to testing, vaccines, and local data

Eau Claire, May 10, 2023 – The federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency will end this Thursday, May 11. This doesn't mean that COVID-19 is no longer impacting our community, but that some testing, vaccination, and other COVID resources will change. The White House first declared a national emergency to address the pandemic in March 2020.

Although the public health emergency is ending, the Eau Claire City-County Health Department will continue to monitor and respond to COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in our community. Community members who have questions about testing, vaccines, or other resources can continue to reach out to us at echealth@eauclairecounty.gov or 715-839-4718.

COVID services expected to change after the public health emergency ends:

COVID vaccines will remain free at this time

The public will still be able to get COVID vaccines and booster doses for free until the federally-purchased supply of vaccine runs out. After that, people with public or private insurance will need to work with their insurance to pay for vaccines. A new federal program is expected to keep providing no-cost vaccines to uninsured Americans; more information on this program is expected in the coming weeks.

For the time being – even after the public health emergency ends Thursday – the Eau Claire City-County Health Department will continue to provide **free** COVID vaccines and booster doses at our monthly vaccine clinics. People still don't need to bring proof of insurance, ID, or proof of citizenship to get a COVID vaccine through the Health Department at this time.

For more information and to sign up to get a vaccine at our monthly clinic, visit bit.ly/covidvaccine-ec.

Many COVID testing options are still available

There may be changes to how health insurance covers COVID tests. We don't know yet what some of these changes will be.

- At-home rapid tests will likely still be available for purchase at retail outlets, such as pharmacies.
- Community testing sites will be limited, so to get a PCR COVID test, you may need to visit your doctor's office or another health care provider. For a list of places where you can get tested in Eau Claire County, visit bit.ly/covidtestEC.

- People with health insurance may need to pay a co-pay or out-of-pocket costs for PCR tests, and PCR tests will likely no longer be free for people without health insurance. Some free test resources will still be available for people without health insurance, including a CDC community testing program that helps people find no-cost COVID testing. Walgreens locations in Eau Claire are participating in that no-cost testing program. You can get more information at testinglocator.cdc.gov.
- Programs that shipped free at-home tests to Wisconsin residents will wind down. The Say Yes! COVID Test program will be available through the end of May while supplies last. Wisconsin residents are encouraged to order their 10 free tests this month before the program ends.

Telehealth service will remain available

People can use the state's free COVID treatment telehealth service until at least December 2023. It connects people who are experiencing COVID symptoms with a clinician via computer or phone to be assessed and potentially prescribed antiviral medication.

COVID data sources will change

The CDC announced that after Thursday, it will discontinue its COVID-19 Community Levels tool.

Using data to monitor COVID continues to be a priority for us. We're evaluating our guidance related to this change, and we will share more information as it becomes finalized.

COVID wastewater data will remain available after Thursday. You can find wastewater data for Eau Claire County and throughout Wisconsin at www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/wastewater.htm.

Impact on other local resources

Find out how FoodShare will be affected here.

Find out how Medicaid will be affected here.

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