



# THE PRESCRIBER e-LETTER

## End of the Federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has announced that the federal COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE), declared under Section 319 of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act, ended May 11, 2023.

According to HHS, daily reported COVID-19 cases have decreased by 92%, COVID-related deaths have decreased by more than 80%, and new COVID-related hospitalizations have decreased by almost 80% since January 2022.<sup>1</sup>

According to HHS, given these COVID-19 trends, COVID-19 policies and flexibilities enabled by the PHE will shift toward improving standards of care for patients.<sup>1</sup>

## COVID-19 PHE Expiration— MassHealth Coverage Updates

After the end of the COVID-19 PHE, several changes will be made to MassHealth's COVID-related policies and coverage. What follows is a summary of the updates to be enacted in June and July 2023.

### Guidance Document

Effective July 31, 2023, the *Pharmacy Program Public Health Emergency Response* document posted on the MassHealth Drug List (MHDL) webpage will be removed. This document outlined important information and guidance related to the MassHealth Pharmacy Program and the COVID-19 PHE.

### Delivery of Prescription Medication to MassHealth Members

MassHealth will continue to pay eligible pharmacy providers for delivery to members after the federal PHE ends. Please see [Pharmacy Facts 145](#) for information on payment adjustments and limitations. Members enrolled in MassHealth fee-for-service plans, the Primary Care Clinician Plan, and primary care accountable care organizations may receive prescription medication delivery.

### Coverage for COVID-19 Testing for MassHealth Members

MassHealth will continue covering COVID-19 antigen over-the-counter (OTC) tests at no cost to members after the federal PHE ends. MassHealth currently covers eight OTC tests per member per month. Effective July 31, 2023, MassHealth will cover two OTC tests per member per month. Prescribers will need to submit a prior authorization (PA) request for additional tests above the quantity limit.

### Coverage of COVID-19 Vaccines for MassHealth Members

MassHealth will continue covering COVID-19 vaccines for MassHealth members at no cost to the members after the federal PHE ends.

As of April 18, 2023, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has amended the emergency use authorizations of the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 mRNA vaccines. The monovalent vaccines are no longer authorized for use in the United States. The bivalent vaccines are now authorized to be used for all doses administered to individuals six months of age and older.<sup>2</sup> Effective June 5, 2023, monovalent COVID-19 vaccines will be removed from the MHDL.

### Coverage for COVID-19 Treatment for MassHealth Members

The FDA has updated the guidance for use of monoclonal antibodies due to the high frequency of the Omicron variant and certain Omicron subvariants.<sup>3</sup> Effective June 5, 2023, bamlanivimab, etesevimab, bebtelovimab, Evusheld® (tixagevimab/cilgavimab), Regen-Cov® (casirivimab), and sotrovimab will be removed from the MHDL because they are no longer authorized for use by the FDA.

Effective July 31, 2023, Trodelvy® (sacituzumab govitecan-hziy) will be available through medical billing only, not through pharmacy billing.

Effective July 31, 2023, Gohibic® (vilobelimab) will be added to the MHDL as available without PA and will be available through medical billing only.

Effective July 31, 2023, Veklury® (remdesivir) will no longer require PA and will be available through medical billing only, not through pharmacy billing.

The National Institutes of Health and the Infectious Diseases Society of America continue to recommend against the use of ivermectin for COVID-19 treatment because of a lack of clear clinical benefit.<sup>4,5</sup> Effective July 31, 2023, Stromectol® (ivermectin) will be available without a quantity limit for use in FDA-labeled indications and those consistent with appropriate clinical evidence.

## Footnotes

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Fact sheet: COVID-19 public health emergency transition roadmap [webpage on the Internet]. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Feb 2023 [cited 2023 May 8]. Available from: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/02/09/fact-sheet-covid-19-public-health-emergency-transition-roadmap.html>.
2. U.S. Food & Drug Administration. Coronavirus (COVID-19) update: FDA authorizes changes to simplify use of bivalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccines [webpage on the Internet]. Silver Spring (MD): U.S. Food & Drug Administration; Apr 2023 [cited 2023 May 8]. Available from: <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/coronavirus-covid-19-update-fda-authorizes-changes-simplify-use-bivalent-mrna-covid-19-vaccines>.
3. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. COVID-19 Monoclonal Antibodies [webpage on the Internet]. Baltimore (MD): Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Apr 2023 [cited 2023 May 8]. Available from: <https://www.cms.gov/monoclonal#:~:text=On%20January%2024%2C%202022%2C%20the,the%20EUA%20until%20further%20notice>.
4. COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines Panel. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) treatment guidelines. National Institutes of Health. [cited 2023 May 8] Available from: <https://www.covid19treatmentguidelines.nih.gov/>.
5. IDSA guidelines on the treatment and management of patients with COVID-19. Infectious Diseases Society of America; 2021 May 27 (Updated 2023 Apr 11) [cited 2023 May 8]. Available from: <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/covid-19-guideline-treatment-and-management/#Recommendations23-24:Ivermectin>.

The *Prescriber e-Letter* is an update designed to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the MassHealth drug prior-authorization (PA) process and the MassHealth Drug List. Each issue **highlights** key clinical **information and updates** to the **MassHealth Drug List**. The Prescriber E-Letter was prepared by the MassHealth Drug Utilization Review Program and the MassHealth Pharmacy Program.