

## COVID to be Declared Endemic by Year's End in Thailand

By [Bangkok Post](#)

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*The Public Health Ministry plans to declare Covid-19 an endemic disease by the end of this year, using its own criteria and with or without World Health Organization confirmation.*

Health permanent secretary **Kiattiphum Wongrajit** announced the intention after a meeting of the ministry's National Communicable Disease Committee on Thursday.

Dr Kiattiphum said the committee planned to declare Covid-19 endemic before the end of the year on its own academically acceptable criteria.

The criteria were – no more than 10,000 new cases a day, the fatality rate does not exceed 0.1% and more than 80% of at-risk people have received two doses of vaccine, he said.

The Public Health Ministry was of the view that Covid-19 had spread for over two years, trends showed the disease was under control and was now not too severe, Dr Kiattiphum said.

“In principle, the disease could spread but is not severe. The fatality rate is acceptable. There can be waves of the disease. But importantly, people must have adequate immunity. People must be vaccinated, and treatment systems efficient.

“After these criteria have been met for a while, this disease can be declared endemic in Thailand,” he said.

“When the situation is promising and the criteria fulfilled, the ministry will make an announcement.”

The permanent secretary for health said officials would take action to speed up the process towards the announcement, rather than waiting for the disease to naturally become endemic by itself, or for the WHO to declare it an endemic disease. Otherwise, it would take

too long, he said.

After Covid-19 was declared endemic, the government would treat patients according to their individual needs and may require everyone or only patients to wear face masks, Dr Kiattiphum said.

At present, the National Communicable Disease Committee requires everyone to wear a face mask while in a public place. Violators can be fined up to 20,000 baht.

Detailed criteria and appropriate future measures had yet to be finalised, he said.

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*Featured image: Everyone was required to wear a face mask as they queued to enter the Pattaya Music Festival in November. The requirement may be eased when Covid-19 is declared endemic in Thailand later this year. (Photo: Chanat Katanyu)*

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