

## IS THE PANDEMIC COMING TO AN END SOON?

*by:*  
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When is this going to be over? For months, this question has been on everyone's mind. We've all had enough of the pandemic. As a result, we all want it to be finished as soon as possible. The government has begun to relax limitations. As a result, businesses may run at full capacity, and people of all ages and comorbidities can travel freely. However, we must not let our defenses and masks down.

The COVID-19 virus is an insecure virus that changes quickly, making it difficult to predict what will happen next. As a result, at this critical stage of the epidemic, countries, communities, and people should not "give up" or "ignore" measures. Living with COVID-19 isn't like living in a state of passive helplessness. Instead, it's about remaining attentive and prepared. To keep surges at bay, we must use a risk-based approach, make informed decisions, and calibrate our tools and measures properly.

Many provinces and cities still have huge populations of unvaccinated people. These people are at danger of contracting serious infections and dying. They could also act as reservoirs for intense transmission, causing healthcare capacity to be overwhelmed when the next wave hits. Furthermore, immunity established through immunizations and spontaneous infection may fade over time, reopening us to infection.

It's never too early to start planning for the next epidemic, as COVID-19 will unfortunately not be the last. We should establish tools to detect and respond to future public health emergencies as we recover from this disaster. They must be multi-sectoral, collaborative, and inclusive. The approach consists of three components: improving

health system resilience, bringing health services closer to people through Universal Health Care (UHC), and investing in pandemic planning and response.

Investing in health and health systems is the first step toward saving lives. The Philippines must invest in health workers by increasing their capability and providing support. To lower the incidence of diseases, the country should invest more in empowering citizens to practice self-care and live healthier lifestyles. We would be able to construct resilient health and community systems that are less vulnerable to health emergencies.

With what we know and the tools we have, we can reduce the impact of COVID-19 this year. However, how long the virus continues to spread and how it evolves will determine this. This will also be determined by how fast and effectively we prioritize the most vulnerable. These are things that we need to do not only in the Philippines, but all throughout the world. Let us continue to build on the lessons learned during COVID-19.

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