

# Public Health Emergency

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a public health emergency (PHE)?

A public health emergency (PHE) is when the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), a federal agency, declares a disease or disorder presents a public health emergency or that a PHE otherwise exists due to significant outbreaks of infectious disease. PHEs can last up to 90 days and can be extended at any time by HHS.

On January 27, 2020, HHS declared COVID-19 to be a PHE. HHS continues to extend the COVID-19 PHE every 90 days.

### How will I know when the PHE has ended?

The current list of PHEs can be found on the federal [PHE website](#). To stay up to date on the status of the PHE, visit [hca.wa.gov/phe](http://hca.wa.gov/phe).

In January, the federal government told us they would continue extending the PHE at least through the end of 2021. They also will give us at least 60 days' notice if it will not be extended. If they continue extending the PHE for 90 days at a time, we expect the PHE to end no earlier than January 16, 2022.

### What is the current status of the PHE?

The current PHE is scheduled to expire on October 18, 2021. If HHS continues extending the PHE through the end of 2021 for 90 days at a time, we expect the PHE to end no earlier than January 16, 2022. Stay up to date on the Apple Health and the PHE at [hca.wa.gov/phe](http://hca.wa.gov/phe).

### Covid-19 Public Health Emergency Timeline With 60-Day CMS Notice Requirements

In a letter to Governors, the Health and Human Services (HHS) indicated the Covid-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) will continue through the end of 2021. When no more extensions are planned, HHS will provide states with 60 days' notice. Under current law, PHEs are limited to 90 days, but can be terminated early or extended.

This chart shows when the PHE expires, the 60-day HHS notification, and the end of the quarter when many flexibilities end.





### **How does the PHE affect Apple Health?**

Usually, a PHE doesn't affect Washington Apple Health (Medicaid) eligibility. However, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act allows Apple Health to stay open for most clients for the duration of the PHE. Certain eligibility and verification factors can also be relaxed.

When the PHE ends, HCA will work with the Health Benefit Exchange, which runs Washington Healthplanfinder, and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to redetermine clients' eligibility for Apple Health.

### **How will I know if the ending of the PHE will affect my or my family's coverage?**

We will tell you either by USPS mail or email if you need to take action to keep Apple Health. Not all clients will need to take action. We will give you at least a month's notice to update your household's eligibility. If Apple Health is going to end, you will get at least 10 days' notice.

If you receive Apple Health coverage through Washington Healthplanfinder, we will try to auto-renew eligibility based on current information on your application. If we cannot auto-renew coverage, we will tell you by USPS mail or email what action you need to take. If coverage ends because you did not complete a renewal, you have 90 days after coverage ends to complete the renewal and have coverage opened back up if you're eligible.

If you receive Apple Health through DSHS, they will send you a notice in the mail explaining what you need to do to get ongoing coverage. If you disagree with any decision regarding your Apple Health eligibility, you have [the right to appeal](#) by requesting a fair or administrative hearing.

### **Will I have a chance to update my information with current income and circumstances prior to the PHE ending?**

Yes. We will tell you either by USPS mail or email if you need to take action to keep your Apple Health coverage. Not all clients will need to take action. We will give you at least a month's notice to update your household's information and you will receive at least 10 days' notice if you are no longer eligible for Apple Health coverage..

If you are enrolled with a managed care plan (Amerigroup, Community Health Plan of Washington, Coordinated Care, Molina or United Healthcare), they may contact you to help you update your eligibility.

### **When will CHIP and HWD premium payments restart?**

Premium collection for Apple Health for Kids with premiums (CHIP) and Apple Health for Workers with Disabilities (HWD) can resume the month after the quarter in which the PHE ends. For example: If the PHE ends in January, the end of the quarter is March so premium collection resumes in April.

When the PHE ends, you will receive a letter sharing when premium requirements will resume.

### **If I am not eligible for Apple Health, what other options will I have?**

Losing Apple Health will open a special enrollment period (SEP) to purchase a qualified health plan (QHP). The American Rescue Plan (ARP) expanded the existing premium tax credit program and provides additional assistance for individuals who are approved or receiving unemployment income. For more information, visit the Washington Health Benefit Exchange's [ARP FAQ](#) webpage.

### **Where can I find more information about Apple Health changes during the PHE?**

You can view more information about temporary eligibility changes at our [HCA COVID-19 webpage](#).

### **What if I have more questions, comments, or concerns?**

Email [AHeligCovid19@hca.wa.gov](mailto:AHeligCovid19@hca.wa.gov).