

[A summarized unofficial version of the press release]

Four Years of COVID-19: Lessons for the Next Pandemic

- *KDCA releases the White Paper on Korea's COVID-19 Response, documenting its pandemic response experience.*
- *The response timeline is structured into five phases, focusing on major events and policy transitions.*
- *The White Paper lays the foundation for timely preparedness and a resilient response system for future pandemics.*

Osong, April 22, 2025 — The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) published its White Paper on the COVID-19 Response on April 15, which systematically documents Korea's response over the past four years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The White Paper outlines the course of the COVID-19 pandemic in Korea and the government's response, from the first confirmed case in 2020 to the lowering of the national infectious disease alert level to Level 1 (Blue, Attention) in May 2024. It is structured into five phases based on changes in response strategies, with a particular focus on the role of the Central Disease Control Headquarters.

Comprising three main parts—① an overview of COVID-19, ② the response process by phase, and ③ lessons learned and future directions—the White Paper is designed to help the public and relevant stakeholders clearly understand the key facts about COVID-19 and the government's response timeline. It also presents the government's strategic direction for future pandemic preparedness.

< Response by Phase According to Strategy Changes>

Phase (Period)	Key Focus
Phase 1 (Jan 20, 2020 – Feb 25, 2021)	Initial response focused on containing the outbreak through the 3T strategy (Testing, Tracing, Treatment)
Phase 2 (Feb 26, 2021 – Jan 20, 2022)	Pandemic surge response through mass vaccination and wide implementation of NPIs(Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions)
Phase 3 (Jan 21, 2022 – Jan 29, 2023)	Transition to targeted management of high-risk groups following the spread of the Omicron variant
Phase 4 (Jan 30, 2023 – Aug 31, 2023)	Transition to managing COVID-19 as an endemic infectious disease
Phase 5 (Sep 1, 2023 – May 1, 2024)	Post-pandemic phase establishing institutional foundations for future preparedness and response

In particular, the White Paper highlights efforts made to restore daily life during the public health emergency and the policy decision-making process throughout the pandemic. It is expected to serve as a key reference for building a rapid, collaborative public health emergency management system and a resilient response framework for future pandemics.

Additionally, the future tasks outlined in Part 3 of the White Paper will be implemented in alignment with the National Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan, announced by KDCA in May 2023.

KDCA Commissioner Dr. Youngmee Jee remarked, "This White Paper is the result of a joint effort by the government, medical professionals, and the public. It is a valuable resource for ensuring a steady and unified response in the event of future infectious disease emergencies."

Dr.Jee added, "KDCA will remain committed to protecting public health and ensuring a safe and healthy daily life by advancing the response system and proactively preparing for future public health emergencies."

The KDCA White Paper on the Response to COVID-19 is available in PDF format on the official KDCA website (www.kdca.go.kr).