

# Belgium virus death toll passes 500, with 12,000 cases

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Belgium's death toll from the novel coronavirus passed the 500 mark Monday, with almost 12,000 cases detected since the start of the epidemic.

Health authorities in the country of 11.4 million said 513 COVID-19 deaths had been recorded and 11,899 cases confirmed by laboratory tests.

But officials said the rise in admissions to hospital and to intensive care units had slowed slightly over the previous 24 hours.

"We're not at the peak, but at what we call the inflection point—that means the force of the epidemic is beginning to diminish thanks to the efforts we have all made over the last two weeks," said Emmanuel Andre, spokesman for government's epidemic team.

"It is extremely important to keep up these efforts—just because the curve is softening slightly today, it doesn't mean it won't get worse if we let up our efforts."

On Friday, Belgium extended lockdown measures by two weeks to April 18 to slow the spread of the virus.

Schools, restaurants and most shops are closed, entry to supermarkets is restricted to allow room for [social distancing](#) and people have been told to work from home.

Outdoor sports activities and walks outside are still allowed, but only in [small groups](#), with a friend or with family members living under the same roof.

Prime Minister Sophie Wilmes said the lockdown could be extended by another two weeks to May 3 if the spread of the virus demanded it.

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