

France reports 78 more coronavirus deaths in 24 hours, total toll 450: official

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France on Friday reported 78 more deaths from the coronavirus over the last 24 hours, bringing the total death toll from the outbreak in the country to 450 people.

Top French health official Jerome Salomon told reporters that 12,612 people were now confirmed by tests in France to have been infected with the coronavirus, while warning this was a "minimal figure" compared with the real number of those infected.

He said that 5,226 people had been hospitalised with the virus, with 1,300 of them in intensive care.

"Half of the patients in intensive care are under 60," he said, warning that the epidemic can hit "young adults" too.

The French from Tuesday were ordered to stay at home except for essential purposes, a lockdown set to last an initial two weeks, but expected to be extended in a bid to halt COVID-19.

"The confinement aims to slow strongly the spread of the virus," said Salomon.

"The effects of the confinement are not immediate—as you know the period of the incubation of the virus is from 2-14 days," he said, warning that people in isolation who currently feel well could still be infected.

"We expect a peak of at between five-eight days, but it will be between 10-22 days before we see how effective the changes in behaviour have been."

He also warned the French not to contemplate taking weekend trips outside of big cities which risked further spreading the virus nationwide.

"Don't leave this Friday evening, stay where you are. You can transport the virus from the city to the countryside."

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