

France reports 642 more coronavirus deaths, total toll 19,323: official

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France on Saturday reported 642 more deaths from COVID-19 in hospitals and nursing homes over the last 24 hours, but registered new falls in the total numbers of coronavirus patients in hospitals and

intensive care.

The new deaths—364 in hospitals and 278 in nursing homes—brought the total toll in the country from the epidemic to 19,323, the French health ministry said in a statement.

However in a continuation of a trend seen over the last days the [number](#) of coronavirus patients in hospital fell by 551 to 30,639. The numbers in intensive care meanwhile fell by 194 to 5,833.

This was the fourth consecutive day there has been a fall in the numbers in [hospital](#) and the tenth day in a row there has been a fall in the numbers in intensive care.

"The fall in the demand for equipment and human resources in [intensive care](#) is continuing, but it is still at an exceptional level, far higher than the usual level in France," the statement said.

France has been in lockdown since March 17 in a bid to slow the spread of the epidemic. But President Emmanuel Macron announced this week that the lockdown could begin to be eased from May 11.

Schools could gradually reopen then, he said—but cafes, cinemas and cultural venues would remain closed, and there could be no summer festivals until mid-July at the earliest.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe and Health Minister Olivier Veran are due on Sunday to give a news conference on how France is dealing with the virus. They are expected to be pressed on how the lockdown can be eased from May 11.

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