

France reports increase in daily virus toll as lockdown eased

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France on Monday reported 263 more deaths from the coronavirus, a sharp increase on previous days as the country marked the first easing of an almost two-month lockdown.

The new deaths brought the total toll in hospitals and nursing homes

from the pandemic in France to 26,643, the [health ministry](#) said.

The ministry had on Sunday reported 70 more deaths, the lowest daily toll announced since March 17, the day the lockdown in France began.

However weekend tolls are frequently lower than during the week, possibly due to reporting lags, particularly in nursing homes.

France was on Monday beginning to emerge from its lockdown, although many restrictions remain in place nationwide.

There has been a steady downward trend in France's key [coronavirus](#) figures in recent days, although officials warn that caution is still needed and the risk of a second wave remains.

Continuing recent trends, there were 64 fewer coronavirus patients in total in [intensive care](#) on Monday.

The government has divided France into green and red areas, with Paris and three other regions classified as red seeing a more limited relaxation of the lockdown.

The senior French civil servant put in charge of the easing measures, Jean Castex, has warned that the lockdown could be reimposed if the number of cases surges again.

"In the absence in the short term of a vaccination or a treatment, the French population remains vulnerable to a resumption of the epidemic," he wrote in his report for the easing of the [lockdown](#).

"The possibility that the (easing) measures can be reversed.... must be anticipated by the authorities," he added.

The health ministry in its statement urged people to wear masks in some situations in public and observe social distancing, saying: "The epidemic is still active and evolving."

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