

Spaniards pour out for 1st exercise in 7 weeks of lockdown

May 2 2020, by Joseph Wilson



People exercise on a seafront promenade in this photo taken with a telephoto lens in Barcelona, Spain, Saturday, May 2, 2020. Spaniards have filled the streets of the country to do exercise for the first time after seven weeks of confinement in their homes to fight the coronavirus pandemic. People ran, walked, or rode bicycles under a brilliant sunny sky in Barcelona on Saturday, where many flocked to the maritime promenade to get as close as possible to the still off-limits beach. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

Thousands of Spaniards woke up early on Saturday to lace up their running shoes for the first time in seven weeks after the government ended a prohibition on outdoor exercise.

At 6 a.m. early risers poured into the streets dressed in athletic gear to run, bike, and speed walk, with many taking extra caution to loosen up atrophied muscles and avoid a twisted ankle that would ruin the joy of release.

A few tried running with a [face mask](#) despite the difficulty it causes with breathing. The masks are highly recommended by Spanish health authorities for walkers and shoppers, to reduce the chance of infection from the virus that causes COVID-19.

"I feel good, but tired. You sure notice that it has been a month and I am not in shape," 36-year-old Cristina Palomeque said in Barcelona after taking a break following a 20-minute jog. She had grown tired of following Zumba and yoga classes online.

"Some people think it may be too early (to go out), as I do, but it is also important to do exercise for health reasons," she said.

A brilliant sunny sky in Barcelona drew many to the maritime promenade to get as close as possible to the beach, which is still off-limits. People are supposed to respect a 2-meter distance, but the crowds in some spots made that impossible.



People walk along a seafront promenade in Barcelona, Spain, Saturday, May 2, 2020. Spaniards have filled the streets of the country to do exercise for the first time after seven weeks of confinement in their homes to fight the coronavirus pandemic. People ran, walked, or rode bicycles under a brilliant sunny sky in Barcelona on Saturday, where many flocked to the maritime promenade to get as close as possible to the still off-limits beach. People are supposed to respect a 1-measure distance, but the crowds in some spots made that impossible. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

"We woke up very early so that we wouldn't find it too full of people, but ... it's complicated," 37-year-old Eduardo Conte said after a run along the Mediterranean beachfront. "I feel a rush (being back outside), but you have to take it easy so we don't all end up with injuries."

The scene was similar to that seen last weekend when Spain's children were let out for a walk with a parent for the first time in six weeks. After some chastising by local officials in the worst cases, the population behaved better throughout the week.

The government has set up time slots for [age groups](#) and activities to prevent crowds from forming and exposing the most at-risk elders.

People between 14 and 70 can now go out for individual exercise, and couples in that age group who live together can go for walks, from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. People over 70 can go out from 10 a.m. to noon and 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., with one caregiver if needed. Children under 14 are now allowed to go out between noon and 7 p.m. for walks with one parent, for up one hour, within 1 kilometer (half a mile) of home. They cannot play with other children.



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Towns and villages with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants are exempt from the timetable dividing people by age groups.

"Today we take a new step in the relaxation of the confinement, but we must take it with caution and responsibility," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wrote on Twitter. "The virus is still with us. We need to respect the rules as well as the guidelines for hygiene and social distancing."

Since Spain's lockdown started on March 14, only adults have only been able to leave home, and only for shopping for food, medicine and other essential goods, and to walk dogs close to home. For two weeks all commuting was banned; now only unavoidable commutes to and from work are allowed, with authorities encouraging people to work from home.

Spain has detailed a complex rollback plan that will vary by province. Those with the fewest cases and with health care resources to handle a rebound of the virus will be the first to enjoy a further loosening of the measures.



A couple kiss in front of the sea in Barcelona, Spain, Saturday, May 2, 2020. Spaniards have filled the streets of the country to do exercise for the first time after seven weeks of confinement in their homes to fight the coronavirus pandemic. People ran, walked, or rode bicycles under a brilliant sunny sky in Barcelona on Saturday, where many flocked to the maritime promenade to get as close as possible to the still off-limits beach. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)



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People wearing face masks to prevent the spread of coronavirus walk along Vuelta del Castillo park, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Saturday, May 2, 2020. Spain relaxed its lockdown measures Saturday, allowing people of all ages to leave their homes for short walks or exercise for the first time since March 14. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



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People wearing face masks to protect against coronavirus walk and exercise in Vuelta del Castillo park, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Saturday, May 2, 2020. Spain relaxed its lockdown measures Saturday, allowing people of all ages to leave their homes for short walks or exercise for the first time since March 14. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A woman wearing a face mask to protect against coronavirus, goes for a walk along Vuelta del Castillo park, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Saturday, May 2, 2020. Spain relaxed its lockdown measures Saturday, allowing people of all ages to leave their homes for short walks or exercise for the first time since March 14. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



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The lockdown, among the strictest in the world, has succeeded in reducing daily increases of over 20% in cases to under 1% and saving Spain's hospitals from collapse.

Spain has 25,100 confirmed deaths from the virus after a daily increase of 276 was reported on Saturday. That is down from daily death tolls of over 900 a month ago. Another 1,147 cases reported over the past 24 hours took the total of confirmed infections to 216,582.

The huge field hospital the military helped set up in a convention center in Madrid was closed on Friday. Madrid had already closed the makeshift morgue the army had established in an ice rink.

In Madrid, police reminded athletes that parks were still off-limits on town hall orders.

"These are very strong restrictions, but it is what it is. We have to follow the instructions from the Health Ministry because they know more than us," 52-year-old Manuel Garcia said in the capital.

"This feeling of freedom is great. When this gets back to normal, all of us will feel even better."

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Citation: Spaniards pour out for 1st exercise in 7 weeks of lockdown (2020, May 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-spaniards-1st-weeks-lockdown.html>

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