

Spaniards aged six and above ordered to wear masks

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Everyone in Spain aged six and above must wear a mask in public where social distancing is not possible, officials said Wednesday as Barcelona

reopened beaches and parks for people to take a stroll.

The new rule would take effect from Thursday, a government decree said, without specifying the penalties for failing to comply.

Mask-wearing is already compulsory on public transport in Spain, where the epidemic has claimed nearly 28,000 lives although the death rate has slowed and the lockdown is being gradually eased.

"Using masks will be compulsory on the street, in open spaces and any closed place of public use... when it is not possible to maintain a safe distance of at least two metres," the decree said.

As well as being compulsory for anyone aged six and over, mask wearing was "recommended" for children between the ages of three and five, it said.

People with breathing difficulties or with an acceptable justification are exempt.

Although 70 percent of the country is now enjoying some limited freedoms, the easing measures are yet to begin in the worst-hit areas of Madrid and Barcelona.

On Wednesday, however, Barcelona reopened its beaches and parks for people to take a stroll in a slight easing of the restrictions.

Although the beaches in Spain's second city had been accessible for exercise in the mornings, the change means anyone wanting to go for a walk along the sand can now do so between 6:00 am and 8:00 pm.

"Let's enjoy the beach responsibly. Remember that no swimming, sunbathing nor group sports are allowed," tweeted the city's police.

However, many people could be seen lying in the sun or having a coffee on the sand, an AFP correspondent said, with police largely turning a blind eye.

"I haven't seen the sea for two months," said Helena Prades, a 43-year-old psychologist sitting on the sand with a colleague, both wearing masks.

"We just really wanted to hear the sound of the waves and walk for a bit along the sand."

The city also opened its parks that have been closed since the start of the March 14 lockdown, such as Park Guell which was designed by the famous Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí.

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