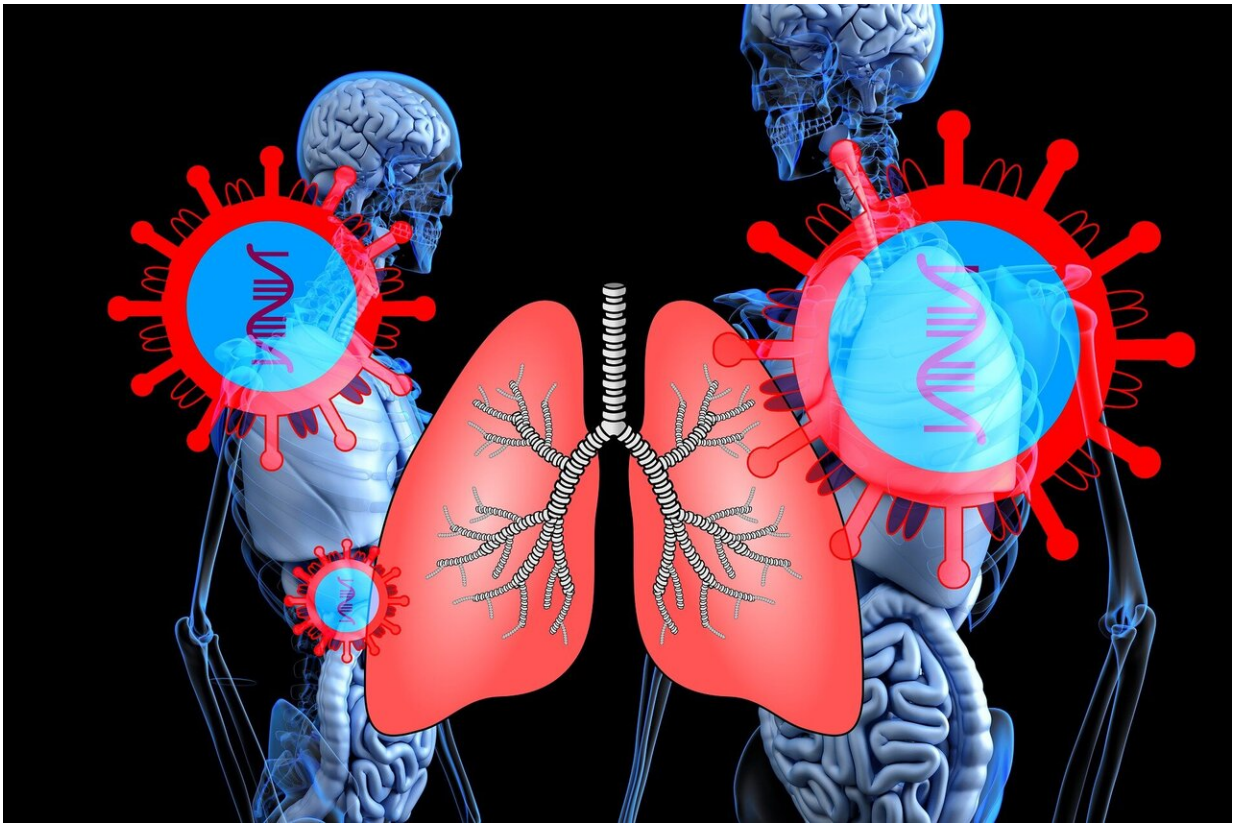


Ukraine reports 'alarming' record rise in virus cases

June 11 2020



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Ukraine said on Thursday there had been an "alarming" rise in coronavirus cases after a daily record of 689 new infections were reported as the country eases lockdown measures.

Cases have surged in Ukraine in recent days, with the total now reaching more than 29,000, according to official figures.

Since Friday, the number of cases has risen by over 3,600, 21 percent more than in the previous seven days.

"Today we have very alarming figures," Health Minister Maksym Stepanov wrote on Facebook, saying the tally for the last 24 hours was the highest since the outbreak began.

Some experts said the uptick was due to an increase in testing rather than a second wave of the disease.

But Stepanov berated Ukrainians for failing to stick to safety rules after lockdown restrictions were eased last month with the reopening of outdoor cafes, beauty salons, dental clinics and parks.

He promised to come up with "urgent" steps to slow down the spread of the virus.

"The threat is still here, but take a look at the streets, take a look at what is happening around you," he said.

"We all came out of isolation, we all decided that (the virus) no longer exists," he added.

Prime Minister Denys Shmygal told a press conference Thursday that officials could reimpose restrictions if there is a "critical growth" in cases nationwide.

Lockdown measures eased further in late May and early June with a resumption of public transport, including metro systems and long-distance and local train services.

Ukraine launched domestic flights on June 5 and will restart international flights on Monday.

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