

New York City postpones indoor dining as US COVID-19 cases soar

July 1 2020



New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, pictured here in March 2020, says indoor dining has been postponed due to a surge in coronavirus cases in the US

New York City will not proceed with indoor dining from next week as planned because of a nationwide surge in coronavirus infections, Mayor

Bill de Blasio said Wednesday.

The Big Apple is due to enter phase three of a four-phase reopening plan on Monday but officials have postponed plans to allow restaurants to sit customers inside with limited capacity.

"It is not the time to forge ahead with indoor dining," de Blasio told reporters, citing the spike in virus cases in numerous American states.

New York state was previously the epicenter of the United States's outbreak, with more than 32,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

But the spread has largely been brought under control, with officials crediting a lengthy shutdown, strict social distancing guidelines and the mandatory wearing of masks.

At the height of New York's outbreak in early-mid April around 800 people were dying from COVID-19 a day. The daily toll dropped to as low as five last weekend.

Hospitalizations and infections continue to hit new lows but officials fear a spike in rates elsewhere could cause an uptick in New York as it slowly reopens business and other activities.

New York City moved to phase two on June 22 when restaurants were allowed to open outside areas. Hair salons also got back to business then.

Just months ago several states mandated quarantine for visiting New Yorkers, but New York now requires some travelers to quarantine, highlighting a sharp turnaround in the nature of the virus's spread in the US.

New York state, New Jersey and Connecticut require visitors from 16 states, mainly in the south and southwest of the US, to quarantine for 14 days if they visit.

Visitors found violating self-quarantine rules are subject to a judicial order and self-funded mandatory quarantine, as well as potential fines of \$2,000 for a first violation and \$5,000 for a second.

Alarming spikes in new cases in southern hotspots Texas and Florida are driving the daily national total of new cases to over 40,000 per day.

Infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci warned on Tuesday that new cases could more than double to 100,000 per day if authorities and the public fail to take steps to suppress the pandemic.

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Citation: New York City postpones indoor dining as US COVID-19 cases soar (2020, July 1)
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-07-york-city-postpones-indoor-dining.html>

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