

# Iran virus deaths top 24,000: ministry

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Deaths in Iran from the novel coronavirus have topped 24,000, the health ministry said Saturday, blaming reduced use of face masks by the public.

Figures "show that the use of [masks](#) is declining, and at the same time we see a rise in daily infections and hospitalisations," ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said in televised remarks.

"Let us not forget that the current condition of the virus reflects our observance of health protocols and mask usage," she said.

Since late February, Iran has been battling the Middle East's deadliest outbreak of COVID-19.

Infections and deaths have been on a rising trajectory this month.

Daily infections have remained above 2,000 for the past two weeks and are nearing the 3,574 high reached in early June.

In the 24 hours to Saturday, 2,845 people tested positive for the coronavirus, raising the total to 419,043, the [health ministry](#) said.

A further 166 deaths from the disease were recorded, bringing the overall toll to 24,118.

There has been scepticism at home and abroad about Iran's official figures, amid concerns the real toll could be much higher.

Iran has made wearing masks mandatory in enclosed public spaces and repeatedly called on the public to refrain from non-essential travel.

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