

Madrid struggles with Europe's acutest 2nd wave of pandemic

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A teacher demonstrates a robot that takes the temperature of children and displays it on a screen in a kindergarten in Madrid, Spain, Friday, Sept. 4, 2020. Pupils under 3 years-old in the Spanish capital head to kindergartens on Friday, the first in-person school activity since the country imposed a strict lockdown in mid-March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. (AP Photo/Paul White)

The Madrid regional government is further restricting family reunions and social gatherings to curb a sharp spike in confirmed coronavirus cases as schools are set to re-open, although officials said Friday that new infections in and around the Spanish capital were being brought under control.

Authorities said an existing ban on outdoor meetings of more than 10 people is being extended indoors because most recent infections have been tied to gatherings in private homes. Attendance at funerals, burials, weddings and religious celebrations, as well as [group visits](#) to museums or guided tourism will also be restricted starting Monday, authorities said.

Nearly one-third of Spain's new virus infections are in and around Madrid, a region of 6.6 million with [high population density](#) and a hub for economic activity for the rest of the country. At least 16% of the beds in Madrid's hospitals are occupied by COVID-19 patients, the highest rate of all Spanish regions.

Regional health chief Enrique Ruíz Escudero said that despite the recent trends, "the situation has nothing to do with what we went through two months ago."

"The pandemic in the Madrid community is stable and is controlled," Ruíz Escudero said. "We are not alarmed."

Madrid is also expanding the number of contact tracers, which has been one of the weakest links in dealing with the new wave of virus cases, and purchasing 2 million rapid [coronavirus](#) test kits.

Spain, which is edging to a half-million confirmed cases since February, is leading the pandemic's second wave in Europe. The country had a rate of virus prevalence above 212 cases per 100,000 residents for the past

two weeks. At least 29,234 people have died in Spain during the pandemic.



Children play in a kindergarten in Madrid, Spain, Friday, Sept. 4, 2020. Pupils under 3-years old in the Spanish capital head to kindergartens on Friday, the first in-person school activity since the country imposed a strict lockdown in mid-March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. (AP Photo/Paul White)



A group of students wearing face mask protection to prevent the spread of the coronavirus during their first class in state school, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Friday, Sept. 4, 2020. After six months with all Spanish schools closed by crisis of COVID-19, today is opening a new school year with new rules to prevent the pandemic coronavirus. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A woman, wearing protective masks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, opens a commercial store in the Plaza Mayor, in the center of Madrid, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020. The Madrid region is a coronavirus hot spot, with almost 32,000 new cases officially recorded over the past two weeks. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



Teachers and auxiliary staff take COVID-19 tests in Madrid, Spain, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2020. The Madrid region is a coronavirus hot spot, with almost 32,000 new cases officially recorded over the past two weeks. The tests are mandatory for school employees. (AP Photo/Bernat Armangue)



A group of young students wearing face mask protection to prevent the spread of the coronavirus receiving special instructions by state members of state school, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Friday, Sept. 4, 2020. After six months with all Spanish schools closed by crisis of COVID-19, today is opening a new school year with new rules to prevent the pandemic coronavirus. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A group of young students wearing face mask protection to prevent the spread of the coronavirus enter in state school, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Friday, Sept. 4, 2020. After six months with all Spanish schools closed by crisis of COVID-19, today is opening a new school year with new rules to prevent the pandemic coronavirus. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)



A group of young students wearing face mask protection to prevent the spread of the coronavirus wait in the courtyard of a state school, in Pamplona, northern Spain, Friday, Sept. 4, 2020. After six months with all Spanish schools closed by crisis of COVID-19, today is opening a new school year with new rules to prevent the pandemic coronavirus. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)

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