

Belgian virus cases continue their rise; lockdown considered

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Ambulance crew work as a patient arrives at the CHR CItadelle hospital in Liege, Belgium, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2020. Belgium has announced restrictive measures across the country in an effort to curb the fast-rising tide of COVID-19, coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/Valentin Bianchi)

Belgian coronavirus cases continued their record rise on Friday before

the government met to consider even tougher restrictions on movements that would amount to a quasi-lockdown.

After surpassing the spring record on Thursday, the number of patients in Belgian hospitals broke the 6,000-mark and stood at 6,187, a rise of 263 in a day.

"Unfortunately, we cannot yet see the long-expected turnaround in figures," said virologist Steven Van Gucht.

After measures were beefed up earlier in the week, the government was to meet again later Friday to consider further restrictions. Non-essential shops are expected to face temporary closure.

Patients in intensive care units reached 1,057 from 993 the day earlier, and virologists have warned that unless tougher measures have a quick impact the saturation point of 2,000 patients will be reached on Nov. 6. Hospital authorities are demanding tougher action since they say the health system is at the point of collapse.

Along with the Czech Republic, Belgium is one of the top two nations in Europe where the virus is hitting hardest at the moment.

The number of positive cases per 100,000 over the past 14 days stood at 1,609, which is bound to keep Belgium in the European top two going into the weekend. Van Gucht said that the true total is higher because testing has been reduced for specific categories of people.

The relentless rise has put more pressure on the [government](#) of Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, which already reinforced measures on Wednesday.



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A member of medical staff wheels a patient on a bed as he arrives at the CHR Citadelle hospital in Liege, Belgium, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2020. Belgium has announced restrictive measures across the country in an effort to curb the fast-rising tide of COVID-19, coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/Valentin Bianchi)



A nurse looks over a chart as an ambulance crew arrive with a patient at the CHR Citadelle hospital in Liege, Belgium, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2020. Belgium has announced restrictive measures across the country in an effort to curb the fast-rising tide of COVID-19, coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/Valentin Bianchi)



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Ambulance crews arrive at the CHR Citadelle hospital in Liege, Belgium, Thursday, Oct. 29, 2020. Belgium has announced restrictive measures across the country in an effort to curb the fast-rising tide of COVID-19, coronavirus cases. (AP Photo/Valentin Bianchi)

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