

Paris hospitals on emergency footing as virus cases rise

October 8 2020



People enjoy a drink on a bar terrace in Paris, Monday, Oct. 5, 2020. French authorities have placed the Paris region on maximum virus alert on Monday, banning festive gatherings and requiring all bars to close but allowing restaurants to remain open, as numbers of infections are rapidly increasing. (AP Photo/Lewis Joly)

Paris region health authorities ordered hospitals to activate emergency measures starting Thursday to cope with fast-rising numbers of COVID-19 patients, who now fill 40% of the region's intensive care units.

The French health minister is expected to announce new restrictions for areas where hospitals are facing strain and infections are mounting, after shutting down bars in Paris and several cities and limiting private gatherings in recent weeks.

The director of the Paris region public health agency, Aurelien Rousseau, tweeted Thursday that he ordered hospital directors to activate a special emergency plan to free up resources and protect medical staff. The move was necessary, he said, "given the pressure on intensive care units and on conventional hospital activity."

Each hospital's emergency plan can include such measures as adding [hospital](#) beds, postponing non-urgent surgery, transferring non-COVID-19 patients to other facilities or sending them home, recalling staff from vacation and soliciting help from volunteers, according to the health agency. Such measures were taken in March and April as the pandemic first swept across Europe.

While some regions are seeing infections slow after new virus rules were imposed, French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday urged more restrictions in areas where the epidemic is still spreading rapidly.



People enjoy a drink and dance on a bar terrace in Paris, Monday, Oct.5, 2020. French authorities have placed the Paris region on maximum virus alert on Monday, banning festive gatherings and requiring all bars to close but allowing restaurants to remain open, as numbers of infections are rapidly increasing. (AP Photo/Lewis Joly)



Cesar, from Portugal, stands in front of his closed bar, in Paris, Tuesday, Oct. 6, 2020. French authorities have placed the Paris region on maximum virus alert on Monday, banning festive gatherings and requiring all bars to close but allowing restaurants to remain open, as numbers of infections are rapidly increasing. (AP Photo/Francois Mori)



People enjoy a drink on a bar terrace in Paris, Monday, Oct. 5, 2020. French authorities have placed the Paris region on maximum virus alert on Monday, banning festive gatherings and requiring all bars to close but allowing restaurants to remain open, as numbers of infections are rapidly increasing. (AP Photo/Lewis Joly)



An empty terrace in Paris, Monday, Oct. 5, 2020. French authorities have placed the Paris region on maximum virus alert on Monday, banning festive gatherings and requiring all bars to close but allowing restaurants to remain open, as numbers of infections are rapidly increasing. (AP Photo/Lewis Joly)

"We are not in a normal time, and we won't be for several months," Macron said on national television.

As countries across Europe face resurgent virus cases, the French government is trying to avoid new blanket lockdowns and focusing on more targeted restrictions instead.

France reported a record daily count of 18,700 new confirmed cases Wednesday, and COVID-19 patients now occupy a quarter of ICU beds

nationwide. France has reported 32,445 virus-related deaths since the pandemic began, among the highest tolls in Europe.

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