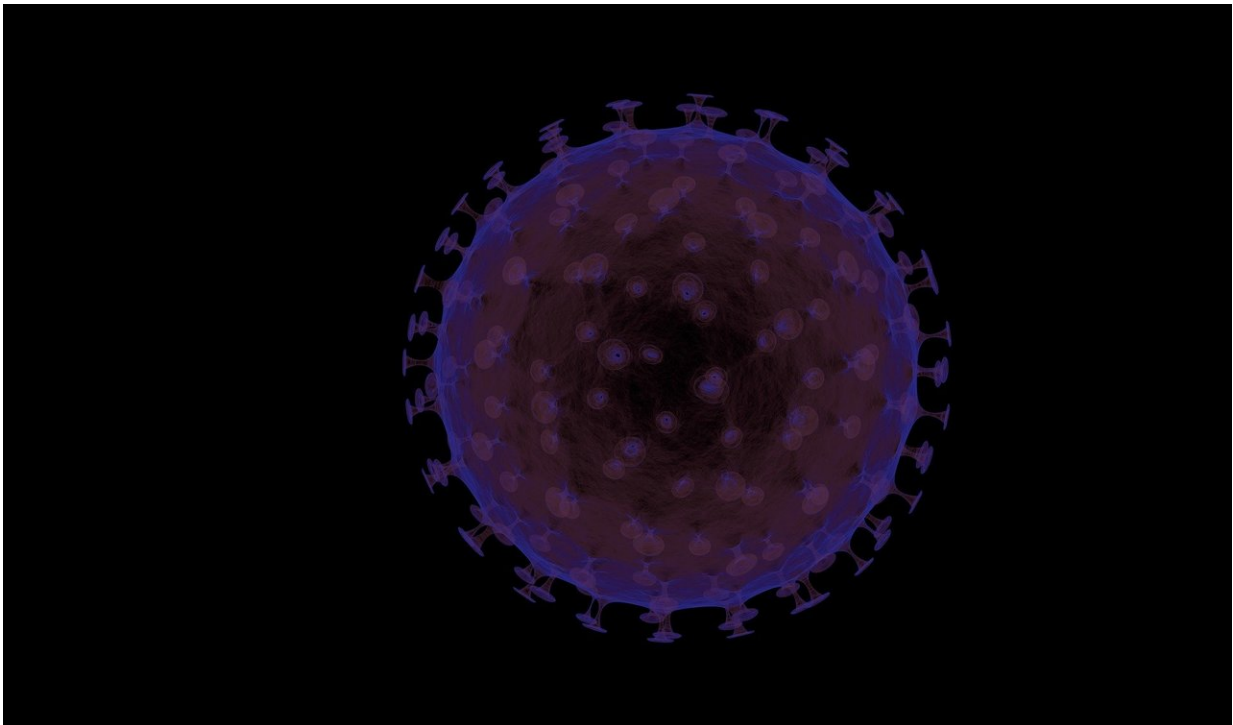


Swiss impose tighter virus rules as cases jump

October 18 2020



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The Swiss government said on Sunday it was making the wearing of masks in indoor public spaces compulsory under new measures introduced after a "worrying" rise in coronavirus infections.

It said gatherings of more than 15 people in public would also be banned

under the rules to take effect on Monday, while service in restaurants and bars would be restricted to seated customers only.

"The sharp increase in the number of contaminations in recent days is worrying. Indeed, it concerns all [age groups](#) and all cantons," the government said in a statement.

Although the pandemic had initially largely spared the wealthy Alpine nation, cases have been now soaring and on Friday it reported 3,087 new cases.

Switzerland is the now European country where virus infections have progressed the fastest in the past week, with a rise of 146 percent according to AFP data.

Total deaths have reached 1,822, out of a population of 8.5 million.

"This last week infections have doubled," President Simonetta Sommaruga told a press conference as she unveiled national restrictions to contain a crisis that had been previously been the responsibility of Switzerland's regions or cantons.

But some Swiss are not happy at the new restrictions, with several hundred people staging a demonstration outside the government's Federal Palace in Bern on Sunday.

"At present, it only takes a week to see a doubling of cases because we have too many people getting infected for each new case," Federal Health Minister Alain Berset said

He said the proportion of positive tests for COVID-19 was very high at 15 or 16 percent, describing the increase in the number of infections as "worrying".

"(But) we should not be afraid of this development... we know how to act and this is the moment," he told the press conference.

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