

Germany warns virus taking 'worrying' turn for worse

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Germany's trend of new infections has taken a worrying turn, the head of its disease control agency said Thursday, as the death toll to date crossed the grim milestone of 20,000.

"The rise in numbers is worrying," said Robert Koch Institute president Lothar Wieler, warning that after plateauing for a few weeks, "the

course of infections could tip over again" into exponential growth.

Germany would have to introduce tougher curbs to break the trend, he said.

"Other measures must be considered. If (current measures) are not working, then I don't see any other possibilities."

Germany ordered a new round of shutdowns in November, closing cultural and leisure facilities as well as banning indoor dining.

Health officials had in mid-November credited the measures with halting [exponential growth](#) in infections.

But Chancellor Angela Merkel herself has demanded tougher restrictions as transmissions began ticking up again after daily new infections held steady at around 20,000 for several weeks.

On Thursday, cases recorded over the last 24 hours reached 23,679, while the daily [death toll](#) came to 440.

Alarming, Wieler said there is currently twice as many outbreaks in elderly and [care homes](#) than in August.

He acknowledged that people are increasingly tired of keeping to measures be it mask wearing or limiting social contacts, and that compliance was now an issue.

But the RKI president urged Germans to turn the situation around.

"We are not powerless before this virus. We have a good strategy," he said.

In a hard-hitting speech before the Bundestag on Wednesday, Merkel issued a stark warning to Germans ahead of the Christmas holiday season when families are expected to gather.

"If we have too many contacts before Christmas and it ends up being the last Christmas with the grandparents, then we'd really have failed," she said.

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