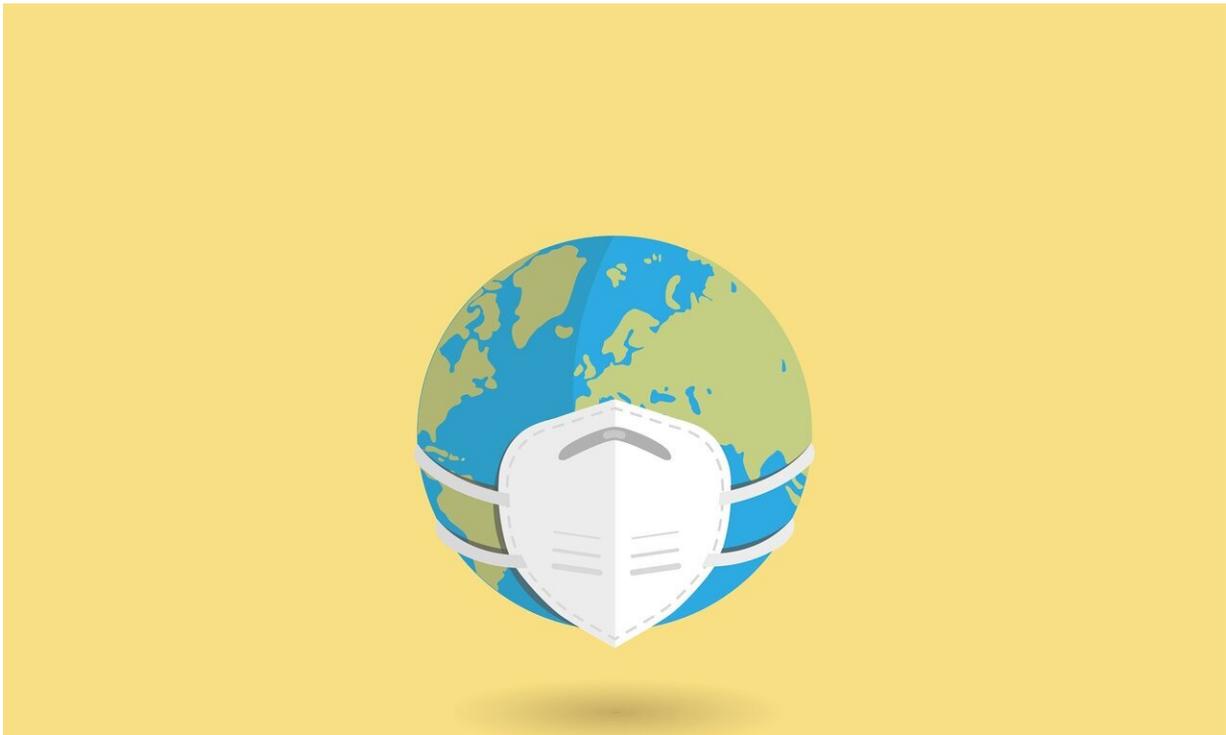


# Sweden readying to close gyms, restaurants, hair salons

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Sweden, known for its softer approach to the pandemic, is preparing to use new legislation to close gyms, restaurants and hair salons ahead of a feared third wave of virus infections, the government said Wednesday.

Sweden in January adopted a pandemic law giving the [government](#) new

powers to curb the spread of the virus.

The country has never imposed the type of lockdown seen elsewhere in Europe, controversially relying on mostly non-[coercive measures](#).

It has however gradually tightened measures since November, including a ban on [alcohol sales](#) after 8:00 pm and on public gatherings of more than eight people.

Sweden has also introduced limits on the number of people allowed in sports centres, swimming pools and shopping centres and a recommendation to wear [face masks](#) on [public transport](#) during rush hour.

The government has previously made preparations under the pandemic law to shut shopping malls if necessary, but is now expanding that to include all commercial and service centres, such as gyms, pools, sports centres, hair salons, cafes and restaurants.

"In the event that the infection rate deteriorates drastically, the government will need to close some businesses," the government said in a statement.

"We have no announcement regarding closures today, but we are preparing to use that part of the pandemic law as well," Health Minister Lena Hallengren told reporters.

"Currently we don't believe it's necessary but we are of course not going to wait until it's too late," she said.

The country of 10.3 million people has been hit much harder than its Nordic neighbours, and on Tuesday reported a total of 617,869 cases of COVID-19 and 12,487 related deaths.

Cases have been in decline since mid-December, but the fall has tapered off lately and [health officials](#) are concerned that a third wave could be just around the corner.

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