

Oslo tightens up anti-Covid measures as cases rise

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The Norwegian capital Oslo on Monday announced tougher measures to stem the spread of coronavirus, closing secondary schools and restricting the number of visitors to homes, as COVID case numbers rise.

Of particular concern to the municipality is the spread of the more contagious British variant of the disease.

A record number of COVID-19 cases, 1,960, were detected last week in Oslo which has a population of 700,000 people.

"We have never before seen such a high level of recorded cases," the capital's mayor Raymond Johansen told a press briefing.

"If the spread of the virus is too high for too long the system collapses and you lose control," he added.

The municipality announced the closing of secondary schools, with students to be taught remotely. This will also be the case for [younger children](#) in the worst-hit districts.

Kindergartens will be closed during the Easter holidays except for children of essential workers.

Also under the new Oslo rules, a maximum of two visitors will be allowed in homes.

"These will be the most intrusive measures taking by Oslo during the pandemic," said Johansen. "It's tough, it's difficult but it's necessary".

The Norwegian capital has already been subject to some strict containment measures, including the closure of non-essential shops and sports halls while bars and restaurants may only offer takeaway food.

According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Norway has been relatively lightly-hit by the pandemic compared to other European nations, but the number of new cases has been on the rise in recent weeks.

The country's COVID-19 vaccine programme took a hit last week when the national authorities decided to suspend the use of the AstraZeneca jab, over fears of a link to blood clots.

As of Monday a dozen countries have decided to suspend using the AstraZeneca vaccine, including Germany, France and Italy, pending advice from the European Medicines Agency (EMA), which plans to meet on Thursday.

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