

As infections soar, Siberian region imposes 2-week lockdown

June 23 2021



A medical worker wearing protective gear walks outside a hospital for coronavirus patients in Kommunarka, outside Moscow, Russia, Monday, June 21, 2021. Russia's national coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported 17,378 new infection cases, more than double the daily tally from early June - more than half of them in Moscow, where the infection numbers have tripled this month. Credit: AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin

Buryatia, a republic in Siberia, on Wednesday became the first Russian region to announce a lockdown because of a surge in coronavirus infections.

The [lockdown](#) will take effect Sunday and last for two weeks, during which only essential services, such as grocery shops, pharmacies, utility companies, public transport and media will be allowed to operate. The republic's coronavirus task force said the goal of the restrictions is to "reverse the epidemic situation, which has been worsening for a fifth straight week."

Coronavirus infections in Russia have surged in recent weeks, with the daily tally of new cases growing from around 9,000 in early June to over 17,000 on Friday.

Buryatia, a region of 985,000 people just north of Mongolia, went from reporting about 90 new infections a day in the beginning of June to over 200 a day last week. In light of the increase in new cases, [local authorities](#) earlier this month already closed theaters, cinemas, swimming pools and spas and restricted shopping malls.

Buryatia is the only Russian region so far that has imposed several lockdowns since the beginning of the pandemic. Last November, the region's governor also closed all nonessential businesses to close for two weeks to cope with a resurgence of the outbreak.



Medical workers transport a patient suspected of having coronavirus on a stretcher at a hospital in Kommunarka, outside Moscow, Russia, Monday, June 21, 2021. Russia's national coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported 17,378 new infection cases, more than double the daily tally from early June - more than half of them in Moscow, where the infection numbers have tripled this month. Credit: AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin



A medical worker wearing protective gear escorts a man, suspected of having coronavirus, at a hospital in Kommunarka, outside Moscow, Russia, Monday, June 21, 2021. Russia's national coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported 17,378 new infection cases, more than double the daily tally from early June - more than half of them in Moscow, where the infection numbers have tripled this month. Credit: AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin



A medical worker carries a patient suspected of having coronavirus on a stretcher at a hospital in Kommunarka, outside Moscow, Russia, Monday, June 21, 2021. Russia's national coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported 17,378 new infection cases, more than double the daily tally from early June - more than half of them in Moscow, where the infection numbers have tripled this month. Credit: AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin



Medical workers wearing protective gear talk as they transport a patient suspected of having coronavirus, at a hospital in Kommunarka, outside Moscow, Russia, Monday, June 21, 2021. Russia's national coronavirus taskforce on Saturday reported 17,378 new infection cases, more than double the daily tally from early June - more than half of them in Moscow, where the infection numbers have tripled this month. Credit: AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin



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Russia had only one, six-week nationwide lockdown last spring. Most coronavirus restrictions in the country were lifted over the summer, with regional governors empowered to decide on which virus measures to keep in place.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Wednesday that

authorities had plans to reimpose another nationwide lockdown.

Russia, a nation of 146 million, was among the first the world to roll out a coronavirus vaccine last year but has been much slower than other countries in vaccinating its population. As of last Friday, only 19.7 million people—about 13% of the population—had received at least one vaccine shot and 16.1 million, or 11%, have been fully immunized.

In Buryatia, over 162,000 people—16% of the population—have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and 126,000, or just under 13%, have gotten both shots.

Russia's state coronavirus taskforce has reported over 5.3 million confirmed infections and 130,895 deaths, the highest death toll in Europe.

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Citation: As infections soar, Siberian region imposes 2-week lockdown (2021, June 23) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-06-infections-soar-siberian-region-imposes.html>

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