

# Moscow to require anti-COVID pass to enter restaurants

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Moscow authorities announced Tuesday that residents will soon have to present an anti-COVID pass to enter restaurants, as the city battles a surge in infections driven by the Delta variant.

The new restriction is the latest in a series of measures after new daily

coronavirus cases tripled in just two weeks, with Mayor Sergei Sobyenin attributing the rise to the highly infectious Delta variant first identified in India.

In a post on his blog, Sobyenin wrote that from June 28 restaurant-goers will have to present a QR code showing a negative coronavirus test valid for three days—or proof they have been vaccinated or were sick with coronavirus within the previous six months.

"We must find solutions that will allow us to maximally protect people and reduce the burden on the healthcare system," he said.

However those solutions, he added, could not disrupt the "normal functioning" of the service industry and "other sectors of the economy".

"Similar rules for visiting restaurants and cafes have been in effect for several months in many European and Asian cities. And the time has come for Moscow to learn from their experience if we want to avoid a new, highly undesirable lockdown," Sobyenin said.

Unlike many European countries, Russia did not reimpose a lockdown when it was hit with a second wave of infections last fall as it sought to support a struggling economy.

The country instead pinned its hopes of curtailing the pandemic on its four homegrown vaccines—Sputnik V, EpiVacCorona, CoviVac and the one-dose Sputnik Light.

But authorities have faced a populace highly sceptical of inoculation against COVID-19, with one recent independent survey saying that some 60 percent of Russians do not plan to get a shot.

Even though free jabs have been available since December, just 15.5

million people out of a population of some 146 million have been fully vaccinated, according to the Gogov website which tallies COVID figures from the regions and the media.

Moscow and a host of regions earlier this month announced mandatory vaccination measures for service sector employees.

Russia is among the countries hardest hit by the pandemic, with the sixth-highest number of cases in the world, according to an AFP tally based on official figures.

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