

No lockdown plans in Russia as virus deaths hit new record

July 2 2021, by Daria Litvinova



People wait in line to receive a coronavirus vaccine at a vaccination center at VDNKh (The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) in Moscow, Russia, Friday, July 2, 2021. Russian health authorities on Thursday launched booster coronavirus vaccinations for those who had been immunized more than six months ago, as the country faces a surge in new infections and deaths .Credit: AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko

Russian authorities reported a record-breaking 679 new coronavirus deaths on Friday, a fourth day in a row with the highest daily death toll in the pandemic.

No plans for a lockdown are being discussed, however, the Kremlin insisted.

The previous record, of 672 deaths, was registered on Thursday. Russia has struggled to cope with a surge in infections and deaths in recent weeks that comes amid slow vaccination rates.

Daily new infections have more than doubled over the past month, soaring from around 9,000 in early June to over 20,000 this week. On Friday, Russia's state coronavirus task force reported 23,218 new contagions. Moscow, its outlying region and St. Petersburg account for nearly half of all new cases.

Yet the authorities are not discussing a lockdown, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday. "No one wants any lockdowns," Peskov told reporters during a daily conference call, admitting that the situation with coronavirus in a number of Russian regions is "tense."

"In order for it to continue not being discussed, we all need to get vaccinated as soon as possible."

Russian officials have blamed the rise in cases on Russians' lax attitude toward taking precautions, the growing prevalence of more infectious variants and slow vaccination rates. Although Russia was among the first countries to announce and deploy a coronavirus vaccine, just over 23 million people—or 15% of its 146 million population—have received at least one shot.



People wait in line to get a coronavirus vaccine at a vaccination center at VDNKh (The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) in Moscow, Russia, Friday, July 2, 2021. Russian health authorities on Thursday launched booster coronavirus vaccinations for those who had been immunized more than six months ago, as the country faces a surge in new infections and deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko

Experts have attributed the comparatively low vaccine uptake to widespread vaccine hesitancy and limited production capacity. Only 36.7 million sets of the four domestically developed vaccines have been released into circulation so far. Nevertheless, this week Russian health authorities gave a go-ahead to booster coronavirus vaccinations for people immunized more than six months ago.

Amid the latest surge of cases, about 20 Russian regions—from Moscow and St. Petersburg to the remote far-eastern region of Sakhalin—have made vaccinations mandatory last month for employees in certain sectors. The move seemingly helped ramp up the immunization drive in recent weeks but also elicited some pushback. Small protests against mandatory vaccinations erupted in Moscow and the Sakhalin region this week.

As of Monday, restaurants, bars and cafes in Moscow can only admit customers who have been vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 in the past six months or can provide a negative test in the previous 72 hours. Customers must visit a government website and get a QR code—a digital pattern designed to be read by a scanner.



A couple wait in line to receive a coronavirus vaccine at a vaccination center with the sign of a QR code at VDNKh (The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) in Moscow, Russia, Friday, July 2, 2021. Russian health authorities on Thursday launched booster coronavirus vaccinations for those who had been immunized more than six months ago, as the country faces a surge in new infections and deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko



People wait in line to receive a coronavirus vaccine at a vaccination center, in VDNKh (The Exhibition of Achievements of National Economy) in Moscow, Russia, Friday, July 2, 2021. Russian health authorities on Thursday launched booster coronavirus vaccinations for those who had been immunized more than six months ago, as the country faces a surge in new infections and deaths. Credit: AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko



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Moscow authorities on Friday said that everyone with symptoms of a respiratory infection should self-isolate at least until they get a negative coronavirus test. "Starting from today, we will view all cases of acute respiratory infections as, highly likely, coronavirus infection," Deputy Mayor Anastasia Rakova said.

Russia's coronavirus task force has reported more than 5.5 million

confirmed coronavirus cases in the pandemic and 136,565 deaths.

Russia had only one, six-week nationwide lockdown last spring, and the authorities have largely shunned tough restrictions that would require shutting down businesses ever since. Only one Russian [region](#)—the Siberian republic of Buryatia—has since had two local lockdowns, with the latest one in effect since Sunday.

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