

# Thailand's capital tightens restrictions to fight COVID-19

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A health worker administers a dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Central Vaccination Center in Bangkok, Thailand, Thursday, July 15, 2021. As many Asian countries battle against a new surge of coronavirus infections, for many their first, the slow-flow of vaccine doses from around the world is finally picking up speed, giving hope that low inoculation rates can increase rapidly and help blunt the effect of the rapidly-spreading delta variant. Credit: AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit

Officials in Thailand further tightened coronavirus restrictions on Monday in response to an alarming rise in cases and deaths that is stressing the country's health care system.

City officials in Bangkok, the capital, ordered a range of establishments to close completely from Tuesday for two weeks or until further notice. They include museums, cinemas, [amusement parks](#), fitness centers and swimming pools. Beauty parlors and barber shops may operate but must limit the numbers of customers, and [public parks](#) can stay open until 8 p.m.

Restaurants have already been limited to takeout service since June 28.

Violations of the city's regulations are punishable by up to a year's imprisonment and a fine of up to 100,000 baht (\$3,040).

Bangkok and other provinces that have been the most severely affected by the current virus surge, which includes ones neighboring the capital and three in the far south, already ban gatherings of more than five people, require residents to remain at home from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m., and forbid unnecessary travel.

Other provinces can set their own rules.

Health authorities on Monday announced 11,784 new cases of COVID-19, bringing the confirmed total to 415,170 since the pandemic began last year. There were 81 new deaths, raising the total to 3,422. More than 90% of the cases and deaths have occurred during the wave of the virus that began in April.

The sharp rise in cases has caused a severe shortage of hospital beds for COVID-19 patients, prompting the authorities to allow patients to isolate at home and in community centers, and giving them access to antigen

test kits that were previously limited to the medical community. The situation has been exacerbated by a shortage of vaccines that has resulted in only about 5% of the population being fully inoculated.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand has ordered a halt to all domestic flights operating from the most severely affected provinces effective Wednesday. Exceptions are allowed for flights to destinations that are part of a plan that allows vaccinated travelers from abroad to stay for two weeks on popular islands such as Phuket and Samui without quarantine confinement.

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