

# Russia's infections, deaths soar to new record high

October 22 2021, by Vladimir Isachenkov

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A medical worker wearing a special suit to protect against COVID-19 treats a patient at an ICU in Infectious Hospital No. 23 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021. The low vaccination rate in Russia, where only about a third of the population is fully vaccinated, is causing concern as the country suffers a sharp rise in cases, setting records for infections and deaths nearly every day this month. Credit: AP Photo/Roman Yarovitcyn

Coronavirus infections and deaths in Russia climbed on Friday to another pandemic record high, putting an additional [strain on the country's health care system](#).

The government coronavirus task force reported 37,141 new infections and 1,064 deaths in the past 24 hours. That brought Russia's death toll to 228,453, Europe's highest by far.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has responded to the worsening situation by ordering Russians to stay away from work between Oct. 30 and Nov. 7, when the country will be observing an extended holiday.

Russian authorities expect the order to help limit the spread of the virus by keeping them out of offices and off public transportation, where mask mandates have been widely ignored. The government also urged [local authorities](#) to tighten their own restrictions during the period.

In some regions where the situation is even more worrisome, Putin said the off-work period could start as early as Saturday and be extended beyond Nov. 7.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the possibility of extending the off-work order or ordering a tighter lockdown would depend on the evolving situation.

"If necessary, other decisions will be made," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters.



A medical staff member in a protective suit treats a COVID-19 patient at an ICU in Infectious Hospital No. 2 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021. The low vaccination rate in Russia, where only about a third of the population is fully vaccinated, is causing concern as the country suffers a sharp rise in cases, setting records for infections and deaths nearly every day this month. Credit: AP Photo/Roman Yarovitcyn

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin followed up on Putin's order by introducing new restrictions in the capital, starting even earlier.

Gyms, cinemas and other entertainment venues, as well as most stores will close in Moscow from Oct. 28 to Nov. 7, along with kindergartens and schools. Restaurants and cafes will only be open for takeout or delivery orders during that period. Food stores and pharmacies can stay



open.

Access to museums, theaters, concert halls and other venues will be limited to those holding digital codes on their smartphones to prove vaccination or past illness, a practice that will remain in place even after Nov. 7.

Most state organizations and private businesses, except for those operating key infrastructure and a few others, will halt work through the 11-day period, Sobyenin said.



Medical staff in special suits treat a COVID-19 patient at an ICU in Infectious Hospital No. 23 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021. Russians' hesitancy in getting the vaccine is of increasing concern as the country suffers a sharp rise in cases, setting records for infections and deaths nearly

every day this month. Credit: AP Photo/Roman Yarovitcyn

"Nonworking days allow us to break the chain of contagion. We need to take those measures quickly now as we are at the pandemic's peak," he said in televised remarks Friday.

Russia's daily infections have been surging for weeks and mortality numbers topped 1,000 for the first time last weekend amid low vaccination rates, lax public attitudes toward taking precautions and the government's reluctance to tighten restrictions. Only about 45 million Russians—roughly a third of its nearly 146 million people—are fully vaccinated.

Russia was the first country in the world to authorize a coronavirus vaccine, launching Sputnik V in August 2020, and has plentiful supplies. But uptake has been slow, blamed in part on conflicting signals from authorities.

While extolling Sputnik V and three other domestic vaccines, state-controlled media often criticized Western-made shots, a message that many saw as feeding doubts about vaccines in general.



A medical staff member wearing a special suit to protect against COVID-19 treats a patient at an ICU in Infectious Hospital No. 23 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021. The low vaccination rate in Russia, where only about a third of the population is fully vaccinated, is causing concern as the country suffers a sharp rise in cases, setting records for infections and deaths nearly every day this month. Credit: AP Photo/Roman Yarovitcyn

President Vladimir Putin has deplored Russians' vaccine hesitancy, saying that "there are just two options for everyone—to get sick, or receive a vaccine. And there is no way to walk between the raindrops."

Asked if Russia could make vaccines mandatory, Putin said he believes they should remain voluntary.



"I believe we mustn't force it but persuade people and prove to them that vaccination is better than illness," he said during Thursday's panel with international foreign policy experts. "We must try to increase people's trust in the government's actions. We need to be more convincing and prove it by example. I hope we will succeed."

After imposing a nationwide lockdown early in the pandemic, the Kremlin has tried to avoid it since then, for fear of hurting the economy, delegating the power to decide on local restrictions to regional authorities across the country's 11 time zones.



Medical workers in protective suits move a coffin with the body of a COVID-19 victim at the morgue of Infectious Hospital No. 5 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021. The low vaccination rate in Russia, where only about a third of the population is fully vaccinated, is causing concern as the

country suffers a sharp rise in cases, setting records for infections and deaths nearly every day this month. Credit: AP Photo/Roman Yarovitcyn



An aerial view shows fresh graves at the Yastrebkovskoe cemetery, which serves as one of the burial grounds for those who died of the coronavirus, outside in Moscow, Russia, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. The government coronavirus task force reported 36,339 new confirmed infections and more than thousand deaths in the past 24 hours. That brought Russia's death toll to 227,389, by far the highest in Europe. Moscow Mayor Sergei said all restaurants, cafes and non-food stores, gyms, cinemas and other entertainment venues in the Russian capital will be shut from Oct. 28 to Nov. 7. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitry Serebryakov





A man wears a face mask to help curb the spread of the coronavirus as he enters a metro station in St. Petersburg, Russia, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. Authorities in Moscow on Thursday announced plans to shut restaurants, cinemas and non-food stores and introduce other restrictions later this month, as Russia registered the highest daily numbers of new COVID-19 infections and deaths since the start of the pandemic. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky



Medical staff talk through their face masks at a ward of COVID-19 patients at Infectious Hospital No. 23 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, on Wednesday, Oct. 20, 2021. The low vaccination rate in Russia, where only about a third of the population is fully vaccinated, is causing concern as the country suffers a sharp rise in cases, setting records for infections and deaths nearly every day this month. Credit: AP Photo/Roman Yarovitcyn





Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures attends the annual meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Russia, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. President Vladimir Putin has voiced consternation about Russians' hesitancy to get vaccinated and urged them to get the shots, adding: "Why wait for the illness and its grave consequences?" Credit: Maksim Blinov, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP



An aerial view shows fresh graves at the Yastrebkovskoe cemetery, which serves as one of the burial grounds for those who died of the coronavirus, outside in Moscow, Russia, Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021. The government coronavirus task force reported 36,339 new confirmed infections and more than thousand deaths in the past 24 hours. That brought Russia's death toll to 227,389, by far the highest in Europe. Moscow Mayor Sergei said all restaurants, cafes and non-food stores, gyms, cinemas and other entertainment venues in the Russian capital will be shut from Oct. 28 to Nov. 7. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitry Serebryakov

Many of Russia's 85 regions already have restricted attendance at large public events and introduced the digital codes for access to restaurants, theaters and other venues. Some have made vaccinations compulsory for certain public servants and people over 60.

In Russia-annexed Crimea where tourism is a significant part of the economy, authorities on Friday announced that hotels would require guests to display codes confirming vaccination or a recent negative PCR



test.

Except for a brief summer bid to require QR codes for entry into bars and restaurants, Moscow had avoided restrictions partly because the capital's health care system has more resources than other regions.

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