

# Slovakia approves 2-week nationwide lockdown as virus surges

November 24 2021

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Medical staff attend to a patient at the COVID-19 ICU unit of the hospital in Bratislava, Slovakia, Tuesday, Nov. 23, 2021. Slovakia's leaders have been proposing a national lockdown as hospitals across the European Union country are hitting their limits amid a record surge of coronavirus infections. Inspired by neighboring Austria, the government is set to discuss a lockdown plan for all, the vaccinated and unvaccinated, on its session on Wednesday. Credit: Martin Baumann/TASR via AP

Slovakia's government on Wednesday approved a two-week national lockdown amid a record surge of coronavirus infections.

Prime Minister Eduard Heger said the measures that take effect Thursday will target all—both unvaccinated and vaccinated.

Under the lockdown, people can leave their homes only for some specific reasons. These include buying essential goods in the nearest stores to their homes, traveling to work and school or to get vaccinated, tested on the coronavirus or for medical treatment.

Unvaccinated people will be required to get tested to go to work if they have not recovered from COVID-19. If working from home is not possible, people will need to have a document from their employers about where their workplace is with details on their working hours.

Walking a dog is allowed within 500 meters (yards) from people's homes.

Heger called the measure "inevitable." Its success "will depend on every single citizen," he said.

Economy Minister Richard Sulik said his Freedom and Solidarity party, a member of the four-party ruling coalition, vetoed a proposal to close most schools. But it agreed that schoolchildren and students will be tested on a regular basis.

They will also be required to wear face coverings at schools.

Also, up to 1,000 service members a day will be helping the struggling health sector to deal with the pandemic, the government announced

Wednesday.

The announcement came after Slovakia set another record for coronavirus infections .

The Health Ministry said daily infections surpassed 10,000 for the first time, with 10,315 testing positive on Tuesday. That's over 1,000 more than the previous record registered Friday.

With 13,080 infections in the last seven days per 1 million people, the nation of 5.5 million is facing the worst surge in the world, according to Our World In Data.

The government was mulling a two- or three-week national lockdown that is supported by President Zuzana Caputova, who called it "unavoidable." The details should be announced later Wednesday.

"We're losing the battle against COVID," Caputova said Tuesday.

Jan Mikas, the government's top official leading the country's response to the pandemic, said Wednesday the new restrictions should affect everyone—the unvaccinated and the vaccinated.

"The only solution is to restrict movement," Mikas said.

On Monday, Slovakia already imposed new restrictions targeting the unvaccinated, who are banned from all nonessential stores and shopping malls. They're also not allowed to attend any public events or gatherings.

With 3,200 hospitalized COVID-19 patients, which is well above the 3,000-bed level considered critical by Slovakia's Health Ministry, the country might be forced to seek help from other European countries.

Health Minister Vladimir Lengvasky said the capacity of hospitals to treat COVID-19 patients will be increased by 150 beds over the next two days. The ministry said almost 83% of the patients haven't been fully vaccinated.

At 45.7%, Slovakia's vaccination rate is one of the lowest in the European Union.

Overall, Slovakia has registered 631,738 virus cases with 14,056 deaths.

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