

Ireland introduces 8 pm curfew for hospitality

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Bars and restaurants in Ireland will close from 8:00 pm from Sunday until January 30 in a bid to slow the spread of the Omicron variant, prime minister Micheal Martin announced Friday.

Martin told the nation that "all across Europe there needs to be very strong and immediate reduction in contacts between people" as he announced the measures, which he acknowledged would be "deeply disappointing for many."

Martin also announced that indoor and outdoor events held earlier than 8 pm would be limited to 50 percent capacity, while weddings will be allowed a maximum of 100 guests.

The measures were taken following advice from [health officials](#) on the new strain.

"It spreads so aggressively throughout all [age groups](#) that we are likely to see infections at a rate that is far in excess of anything we've seen to date," warned Martin.

"None of this is easy. We are all exhausted with COVID and the restrictions it requires.

"The disappointments and the frustrations take a heavy toll on everyone. But it is the reality that we are dealing with. We cannot wish it away. And there is no silver bullet to fix it," he added.

On a brighter note, the leader said Ireland, which has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, was in a "much, much stronger place" than it was during previous waves.

"We just need to get to the other side of this Omicron wave as safely as possible," he added.

Ireland reported more than 4,000 cases on Friday, but deaths remain low.

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