

Portugal tightens restrictions despite virus vaccine success

December 1 2021, by Helena Alves



A worker wipes the floor by the pediatric emergency entrance at the Hospital Garcia de Orta in Almada, south of Lisbon, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. A sign posted on the door announces that the hospital is closing its pediatric services after finding out that a health worker who had contact with members of a soccer club affected by an omicron coronavirus variant outbreak was also infected with the same strain. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

Portugal tightened passenger entry requirements and mandated masks indoors to curb an upward trend in coronavirus infections as the country with one of the strongest vaccination records in Europe entered a "state of calamity" Wednesday.

The crisis declaration, Portugal's second this year, is one step below a state of emergency and gives the government the legal authority to impose stricter measures without parliamentary approval.

Masks now are required in enclosed [public spaces](#), and individuals must show proof of vaccination, having recovered from COVID-19 or a negative virus tests to enter restaurants, cinemas, gyms and hotels. Nightclubs, hospitals, nursing homes and sports venues also must require negative virus tests from visitors and patrons, including vaccinated ones.

"With the test, we feel more comfortable. We don't leave the club thinking, 'Do I have COVID or not?'" Sara Lopes, a 21-year-old shop worker, said as she lined up at a central Lisbon nightclub as the new requirements took effect at midnight.

"It's a bit of a hassle to have to make appointment after appointment at the pharmacy, but it's fine," Lopes said.

Under the new rules, most arriving passengers must show negative [test](#) results at Portugal's airports, seaports and land borders.



Workers get ready for the opening of a new vaccination center in Lisbon, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. The new center, the biggest in the country, will open Wednesday, Dec. 1. Portuguese health authorities on Monday identified 13 cases of the omicron coronavirus variant among members of a top soccer club and were investigating whether it was one of the first reported cases of local transmission of the virus outside of southern Africa. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



A woman pulls a suitcase at Lisbon's international airport, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. Portugal is bringing back some tight pandemic restrictions, less than two months after scrapping most of them when the goal of vaccinating 86% of the population against COVID-19 was reached. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



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A worker disinfects chairs at a new vaccination center in Lisbon, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. The new center, the biggest in the country, will open Wednesday, Dec. 1. Portuguese health authorities on Monday identified 13 cases of the omicron coronavirus variant among members of a top soccer club and were investigating whether it was one of the first reported cases of local transmission of the virus outside of southern Africa. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



A couple embrace at Lisbon's international airport, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. Portugal is bringing back some tight pandemic restrictions, less than two months after scrapping most of them when the goal of vaccinating 86% of the population against COVID-19 was reached. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca



People wearing face masks to curb the spread of COVID-19 walk in downtown Lisbon, Monday, Nov. 29, 2021. Portuguese health authorities on Monday identified 13 cases of omicron, the new coronavirus variant spreading fast globally, among members of the Lisbon-based Belenenses SAD soccer club, and were investigating possible local transmission of the virus outside of southern Africa. Credit: AP Photo/Ana Brigida



A woman wearing a face mask walks past a COVID-19 awareness sign at Lisbon's international airport, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. Portugal is bringing back some tight pandemic restrictions, less than two months after scrapping most of them when the goal of vaccinating 86% of the population against COVID-19 was reached. Credit: AP Photo/Armando Franca

Experts believe that Portugal's vaccination rate, which at 87% of over 10 million residents is one of the highest globally, has shielded the country from the infection spikes recently experienced by some other European countries.

Still, the number of hospitalized COVID-19 patients has been rising since September. Portuguese authorities on Tuesday recorded 2,907 new cases and 15 deaths.

Authorities in Portugal have confirmed an outbreak of the new coronavirus variant, omicron, among members of a professional soccer club and a medical worker who had contact with them.

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