

Spain: PM urges Christmas caution as hospital staff infected

December 6 2021



Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez delivers a speech at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, Nov. 12, 2021. Spain's prime minister is urging people to "remain prudent" about COVID-19 over the holidays as Christmas festivities at one Spanish hospital are suspected of infecting dozens of staff. Sanchez said Monday, Dec. 6 that Spaniards can't "let their guard down" because the coronavirus continues to spread. Credit: Julien de Rosa, Pool Photo via AP, file

Spain's prime minister on Monday urged people to "remain prudent" about COVID-19 over the holidays, as Christmas festivities at one Spanish hospital are suspected of infecting dozens of staff.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez told reporters that Spaniards can't "let their guard down" because the coronavirus continues to spread, despite fewer cases and fewer difficulties for the health service than this time last year.

The regional hospital of Malaga, a city on Spain's southern coast, said 170 staff attended a Christmas dinner in a restaurant last weekend. Since then, 68 staff, including intensive care nurses and doctors, have tested positive for COVID-19.

The staff took [antigen tests](#) before the event and were negative, which is making authorities question whether the dinner gathering was the cause of the outbreak, Spanish private news agency Europa Press reported.

The infected [staff](#) were all fully vaccinated and are showing no symptoms, Europa Press said, citing unidentified [hospital](#) sources.

The Andalucia province, where Malaga is located, has recently witnessed a rise in cases. Its 14-day infection rate stands at 136 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

In Spain as a whole, that rate stood at 248 last Friday.

Authorities are also mindful of the new omicron variant, with 10 cases reported nationwide, though the scale of the threat from it isn't yet clear.

The regional government of the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean, which includes Mallorca, announced Monday it had detected four new omicron cases. It found two other cases last week.

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