

Swiss launch new restrictions amid surge in COVID infections

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The Swiss government said Friday it will require proof of vaccination or recovery from COVID-19 for access to restaurants, cultural or sports events and all other indoor events as the country faces a new surge in

coronavirus cases.

The executive Federal Council, after coordinating with regional leaders, announced a series of new measures to take effect Monday. Strain is growing on Swiss hospitals after the total number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care units exceeded the crucial threshold of 300.

"The epidemiological situation is extremely worrying; the number of hospital admissions continues to rise and the occupancy of intensive care units is very high in some regions," the government said in a statement.

Among other steps, most people will be required to work from home, and those who need to go to their job sites will be required to wear masks if more than one person is in a room. Private gatherings will be limited to 10 people if any one among them aged 16 or more has not been vaccinated or hasn't recovered from the disease.

The rich Alpine country of about 8.5 million reported 9,941 new infections and 41 new COVID-related deaths from Thursday to Friday, with a 14-day incidence rate of more than 1,400 per 100,000 inhabitants—roughly a 10-fold increase from levels recorded in mid-October.

Recent daily death figures remain well below a previous record-high toll in late 2020 and early 2021, when 80 to 90 or more people were dying each day.

The latest figures showed nearly 98% of the COVID-19 cases were linked to the delta variant, while slightly more than 2% were of the new omicron variant that has been surging in some other countries.

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