

Dutch to reopen schools despite virus cases rising

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Dutch schools will reopen next week as planned after a longer than usual Christmas holiday, the government announced Monday, despite rising infections fuelled by the Omicron variant.

On December 19, the Netherlands imposed some of the toughest restrictions in Europe to curb the rapidly spreading Omicron, closing schools for three weeks and shutting all non-essential shops, cultural and entertainment venues until January 14.

"The reopening is responsible," the Dutch education ministry said, citing the country's Outbreak Management Team, which advises the government on handling the COVID-19 pandemic.

While primary and high schools will reopen on January 10, higher education institutions are being restricted to [online courses](#) "due to an increase in the number of infections in this age group," the education ministry added.

Teens aged 17 and under will again be allowed to play sports outside until 8.00 pm from next week, when the situation will again be assessed.

The Dutch National Institute of Public Health said Monday that positive coronavirus cases were rising, mainly because the more infectious Omicron strain was now dominant.

Around 14,623 people tested positive on Monday, compared to 11,440 a week before, with the average rate of infection rising for a sixth day in a row, the RIVM said.

Under the Dutch restrictions, visitors have been confined to two people at a time, while four per household were allowed during the Christmas weekend and New Year.

Groups of people outside are restricted to no more than two, but there has been no ban on the movement of [people](#).

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