

# Sweden: Health officials advise expanded use of vaccine pass

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Sweden's public health authorities on Wednesday advised restaurants, cultural venues and leisure centers to ask their customers to show digital proof of COVID-19 vaccination starting next week.

The recommendation from the Swedish Public Health Agency isn't a legal requirement but voluntary guidance for businesses. Sweden's digital certificates only show vaccination status—not proof of a negative test or recent recovery from COVID-19.

As of Jan. 12, locations can introduce certificates as entry requirements "in more activities where the risk of spreading of the infection is great," Social Affairs Minister Lena Hallengren said.

Besides restaurants, they include cultural venues such as museums and theaters, leisure facilities such as gyms and swimming pools, and long-distance public transportation, the government said in a statement.

Currently, the passes only are used for public gatherings and indoor events of more than 100 people.

"The spread of COVID-19 is increasing in Sweden. We need to be prepared to quickly introduce more accurate infection-control measures," Hallengren said.

Sweden reported a record-smashing 17,320 new daily cases on Wednesday.

For most of the pandemic, Sweden stood out among European nations for its comparatively hands-off response. The Scandinavian country never went into a lockdown or closed businesses, relying instead on citizens' sense of civic duty to control infections. Authorities have emphasized individual responsibility instead of government health measures.

Authorities urged residents again Wednesday to get vaccinated. Public Health Agency official Britta Bjorklund said during a news conference that "there is a 12 times higher risk for the unvaccinated to become seriously ill and be in need of medical care."

Official figures show that 85.9% of the population age 12 and over have received a first shot, while 82% have had two jabs.

In addition, 30.9% of people age 18 and over have had a third shot.

In November, Sweden introduced a digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate for public gatherings and events with more than 100 people indoors.

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