

Belgium to ease COVID-19 measures as infections decline

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Belgium will ease a slew of COVID-19 measures from next week, with restaurants and bars allowed to open for full hours and children under 12 no longer forced to use face masks, as authorities anticipate a further

decline in infections.

The government announced Friday that the nation of 11 million will go from code red, the toughest for virus measures, to code orange as of Feb. 19.

"We can start easing several measures. There will be no closing time in bars and restaurants anymore and no more limits on how many people can sit together at a table," said Prime Minister Alexander De Croo.

Beyond the full expansion of bar and [restaurant](#) opening hours, that means that customers will no longer have to wear masks. Nightclubs and dancing venues will also be allowed to reopen.

Outside activities, including concerts, will be able to operate under far more relaxed measures again.

Infections in the week ending Feb 7 fell by 44% compared to the previous week and stood at 23.239 cases. New hospitalizations and intensive care cases also started to decline.

"Never forget that the past months were extremely difficult" De Croo said. "But we got through this."

Other European countries are also relaxing their pandemic measures, as more and more governments design protocols to co-exist with the coronavirus.

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