

Sweden joins others in announcing end of virus restrictions

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Sweden's Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson announces during a digital press conference that Sweden will lift nearly all Covid-19 restrictions on February 9th, in Stockholm, Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022. Credit: Marko Säavälä/TT via AP

Sweden on Thursday joined other European nations in saying it will

remove coronavirus restrictions.

"It is time to open Sweden again," said Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, announcing the restrictions would be removed from Feb. 9.

Among the measures and recommendations that will be lifted, Sweden will allow people to return to restaurants with no limitation on how many people can be there, how much space there should be or opening hours. Requirements for vaccine certificates and wearing [face masks](#) on public transportation will also be removed, as well as the recommendation to limit [social contacts](#).

On Tuesday, neighboring Denmark took the lead among European Union members by scrapping most restrictions. Hours later, Norway lifted its ban on serving alcohol after 11 p.m. and the cap on private gatherings of no more than 10 people.

"The pandemic is not over but has entered a totally new phase," Andersson stressed.

Social Affairs Minister Lena Hallengren told the same news conference that authorities "will continue to be vigilant about how the pandemic will develop."

The reason for the Swedish move is similar to that in Denmark: Although there is an increase in infection rates, it is not burdening hospitals. High vaccination rates are also making the situation look more hopeful. Andersson said 80% of all Swedes over the age of 50 have now received three vaccine doses.

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