

Dutch to drop last remaining COVID-19 restrictions next week

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Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte, gestures as he speaks to the media before a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace in Paris, Wednesday, March 9, 2022. Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte is for bilateral talks in Paris. Credit: AP Photo/Michel Euler

The Dutch government will drop its last remaining COVID-19 restrictions next week despite a recent rise in infections as the nation learns to live with the coronavirus, officials said Tuesday.

The Netherlands has already ended a nationwide lockdown and scrapped most virus measures. As of March 23, wearing a [face mask](#) on public transport will no longer be obligatory. Masks will still have to be worn on airplanes and behind security screening at airports.

The government also is halting the use of a digital COVID-19 pass to get into nightclubs and other large-scale events, the only place where they were still required.

"It is possible and responsible to further relax" measures, national broadcaster NOS quoted Health Minister Ernst Kuipers as saying.

As part of the latest easing, people flying to the Netherlands from the European Union or the Schengen passport-free zone will no longer have to show a COVID-19 pass on arrival.

New infections, which had been declining for weeks, began rising again after the Dutch celebrated the annual carnival weekend early this month with large street parties in many towns and cities.

More than 21,600 people have died of COVID-19 in the Netherlands during the pandemic, which began in March 2020. About 85% of people 12 and over are fully vaccinated and 62% of Dutch adults have had a booster shot.

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