

Beijing tightens COVID restrictions as long holiday begins

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Beijing residents will need clear COVID tests to enter public spaces, officials said Saturday, announcing fresh virus controls at the start of a Labour Day holiday muted by creeping infections in the capital.

The five-day break is typically one of China's busiest travel periods, but the country's worst COVID resurgence since early in the pandemic is expected to keep people home.

Faced with the highly transmissible Omicron variant, Chinese officials have doubled down on their zero-COVID policy, quashing virus clusters through mass testing and lockdowns.

Despite mounting [economic costs](#) and public frustration, the capital city announced it would further restrict access to [public spaces](#) after the holiday period.

Starting May 5, a negative COVID test taken within the past week will be needed to enter "all kinds of public areas and to take [public transport](#)", according to a notice on the city's official WeChat page.

For activities such as [sporting events](#) and group travel, participants will also need to show a negative COVID test taken within 48 hours, along with proof of "full vaccination," according to the new rules.

China reported more than 10,700 domestic COVID cases on Saturday, with most in economic engine Shanghai.

The eastern metropolis has been sealed off for around a month after becoming the epicentre of the latest outbreak.

Cases are trending downwards, yet frustration and anger is boiling in the city of 25 million where many have been ordered to stay at home for several weeks.

Shanghai officials said on Saturday that its new cases were all found among quarantined or restricted groups—signalling that community infections could be slowing.

They added that hundreds of companies on a "whitelist" have resumed work, with around 1,000 firms allowed to restart operations too, [state media](#) said.

In Beijing, cases nudged up to 54, according to the National Health Commission.

As the long holiday started, consumers in the capital were asked to show proof of negative COVID tests—from within 48 hours—to enter public areas such as malls, shops and scenic spots.

The city will make COVID testing free for residents starting Tuesday, authorities said.

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