

Cyprus reinforces face mask rule indoors

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Cyprus has reintroduced the mandatory use of face masks indoors for all people aged over 12, as coronavirus cases spike, the Mediterranean holiday island's health ministry announced Wednesday.

The ruling, which comes into effect on Friday, was announced by Health

Minister Michalis Hadjipantela after a cabinet meeting.

It follows a new spike in COVID-19 infections in recent weeks, with the [health ministry](#) recording 19,503 positive cases from June 25 to July 5.

The decision represents a U-turn for authorities, who had lifted the previous [face mask](#) mandate on June 1.

Hadjipantela cited an increase in COVID-related hospital cases and said infected people circulating freely without [masks](#) was a contributory factor.

According to last week's health ministry epidemiological report, three people died from COVID-19 and 75 patients were hospitalized, four in a serious condition.

On June 28, [face masks](#) were reintroduced for visiting pharmacies, clinical labs and government testing sites for COVID.

Face coverings must also be worn when visiting hospitals, nursing homes and on [public transport](#).

Many scientists prompted authorities to reinstate the mask following the latest surge in COVID cases and hospitalizations, attributed to the prevalence of highly infectious Omicron subvariants BA4 and BA5.

Authorities were hesitant about reinstating the face mask amid the peak tourist season, fearing loss of arrivals, especially when neighboring destinations do not have mask mandates.

Coronavirus infections in the Republic of Cyprus since the pandemic started in March 2020 have reached 515,596 and 1,075 deaths, out of a population of some 900,000.

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