

German health minister urges stepped-up COVID-19 measures

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Federal Minister of Health Karl Lauterbach attends a press conference on the current COVID-19 situation and the Ministry of Health's new campaign to protect against the virus, in Berlin, Germany, Friday Oct. 14, 2022. Credit: Michael Kappeler/dpa via AP

Germany's health minister on Friday urged the country's 16 states to consider stepping up their measures against the coronavirus amid a rise in new cases.

Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said he favors requiring mask-wearing indoors, a measure that has largely faded in Germany except on public transport, in medical facilities and care homes.

"The direction we're going in isn't a good one," Lauterbach told reporters in Berlin.

He added that it would be better for states to impose limited restrictions now than stricter ones later. "The sooner we step on the brake the better it will be," he said.

German authorities registered over 114,000 newly confirmed cases in the past 24 hours, and 165 COVID-related deaths. The number of newly confirmed cases per 100,000 inhabitants over a seven-day period stood at 760, compared with 695 a week earlier.

Lauterbach said the actual number of cases could be three-to-four times higher, as many positive results with rapid tests are never reported to authorities.

A rise in cases in Bavaria has been linked to the recent Oktoberfest, which draws hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

Lauterbach said more could have been done to limit the spread of the virus at the beer festival in Munich, such as offering or mandating on-site testing for visitors.

The Health Ministry launched a new nearly 33 million-euro (\$32 million) advertising campaign Friday, using 84 case studies of real

people affected by COVID-19 to encourage vaccinations.

Lauterbach said getting the shot remains an important way of protecting recipients and others. The risk of death for people over 60 drops by 90% if they get a fourth shot, he said.

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