

Spain re-imposes masks in hospitals as flu cases surge

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Wearing masks will be obligatory again in Spain's hospitals and other health care facilities from Wednesday, the health ministry said on Monday as the country faces a flu outbreak.

The decree was announced after a meeting between the [health ministry](#) and representatives of the country's regions, who control their own health systems.

Spain, which was hit hard by the first wave of COVID-19 in 2020, has been considering the move for several days but a final decision was held up by disagreements among its regions.

"Since the pandemic, we have learnt," said Spanish Health Minister Monica Garcia after the meeting.

"We have thought hard about the issue of the mask to protect above all [health centers](#) and hospitals, to protect patients as much as (health care) professionals."

The wearing of masks is "a measure that is effective, common sense, that is backed by [scientific evidence](#) and that is welcomed by the general population", she added.

Garcia had already on Friday expressed her support for a return to obligatory masks in [health care facilities](#) in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

The eastern regions of Valencia and Catalonia had also said on Friday that they would require [masks](#) for health care workers and patients.

For days, doctors in Spain have been raising the alarm about rising cases of the flu, as well as COVID and other respiratory viruses.

Mask mandates were well respected in Spain during the pandemic, where lockdowns were among the strictest in the world.

Masks were required until July 2023 in places likely to welcome at-risk

populations, such as hospitals, retirement homes and pharmacies.

The coming mandate will not apply to pharmacies, the ministry said.

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