

UK minister warns no big changes to virus lockdown

May 8 2020



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The British government warned the public on Friday not to expect any major changes to the nationwide coronavirus lockdown next week, as the official daily death toll topped 31,000.

Britain has lost more people to COVID-19 than any other European

country, but there is growing pressure on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to ease stay-at-home orders imposed in late March.

The devolved government in Wales on Friday unveiled plans to re-open garden centres and libraries, but said the wider lockdown would remain for another three weeks.

Johnson is due to announce his own plans for England in a televised address on Sunday evening, but one of his top ministers made clear Friday there would be no big changes.

"We have to be realistic that there isn't going to be any dramatic overnight change," Environment Secretary George Eustice told the daily media briefing.

"We will be very, very cautious as we loosen the restrictions we have, as the data that we're outlining on a daily basis shows we are not out of the woods.

"There are still major challenges.

"We will be living with this virus for some time to come and it's therefore important to avoid that second peak that could overwhelm our National Health Service."

He said deaths among patients in hospitals, [care homes](#) and the wider community who tested positive for coronavirus rose by 626 on the previous day to 31,241.

A six-week old baby with an underlying health condition was among the new deaths recorded in England, according to the state-run National Health Service (NHS).

The true death toll is expected to be higher, as Britain has only recently ramped up its ability to test people for COVID-19.

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published on Tuesday, which has a lag of up to two weeks, showed more than 32,000 deaths with [coronavirus](#) on the [death](#) certificate.

Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford announced "modest adjustments" from Monday, with people allowed to exercise outside their homes more than once a day, while staying local.

Garden centres will re-open if they can prove they can keep people a [safe distance](#) apart, and [local authorities](#) will begin planning how to open libraries and municipal recycling centres.

Responsibility for virus measures in the United Kingdom is devolved to its four nations—England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—but so far they have all moved in lockstep.

In Scotland, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon on Friday said the lockdown would remain in place, although she plans to allow people to take more outdoor exercise.

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Citation: UK minister warns no big changes to virus lockdown (2020, May 8) retrieved 19 September 2024 from

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