

Turkey makes masks compulsory in 42 provinces after uptick

16 June 2020



A man wearing a face mask to protect against the new coronavirus, holds a young girl on his shoulders, in Ankara, Turkey, Sunday, June 14, 2020. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has revealed Tuesday new plans to ease restrictions in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus, including the July 1 reopening of theaters, cinemas and other entertainment centers. (AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)

Turkey has made the wearing of face masks mandatory in five more provinces, following an uptick in COVID-19 cases.

Health Minister Fahrettin Koca tweeted early Tuesday that the wearing of masks is now compulsory in 42 of Turkey's 81 provinces.

In the remaining provinces, residents are required to wear masks on public transportation and in shops and malls, and are being advised to wear masks and keep to social distancing practices elsewhere.

Koca tweeted: "we cannot struggle against the virus without masks."

Turkey saw an upward trend in the daily number of infections after the government authorized cafes, restaurants, gyms, parks, beaches and museums to reopen, lifted inter-city travel restrictions and eased stay-at-home orders for the elderly and young at the start of June.

The daily number of infections rose steadily to above 1,500 on Sunday and Monday after hovering around 800 to 900 last week.

On Tuesday, Koca reported 1,467 new infections—125 fewer than on Monday. The minister also reported 17 deaths, one fewer than the previous day. He reported a rise in the number of patients in intensive care and those who have been intubated.

Turkey now has 181,298 COVID-19 infections and 4,842 deaths.

Pinar Okyay, a member of Turkey's scientific advisory body, said the resumption of some lockdown measures was possible.

"The increase is being monitored very carefully," Okyay told HaberTurk news channel. "If the increase continues in this way, we may have to reimpose some measures."

In the eastern province of Ardahan, the number of infections jumped from just three to 18 following the lifting of travel restrictions and the arrival from travelers from other regions, Gov. Mustafa Masatli said Monday.

A village in the central province of Konya was placed under quarantine after 22 people were infected following a funeral wake, Hurriyet newspaper reported.

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APA citation: Turkey makes masks compulsory in 42 provinces after uptick (2020, June 16) retrieved 18 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-06-turkey-masks-compulsory-provinces-uptick.html>

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