

Mexico's capital on highest COVID alert amid surge in cases

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A youth keeps his hand on the spot where he was vaccinated with Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine during a vaccination drive at University Stadium in Mexico City, Friday, July 23, 2021. So far, about 42.4 million people have been vaccinated, according to the health ministry. That is about 47% of the adult population, and about 30% of the total population. Credit: AP Photo/Fernando Llano

Mexico City and a half-dozen of the country's 32 states are now on "red" alert as COVID-19 infections rose to their highest level ever.

As of Friday, Mexico had over 144,000 active coronavirus cases nationwide, 4.6% more than the previous peak during the country's surge in January.

The country has seen 243,733 test-confirmed deaths, but the country does little testing and studies of death certificates indicate the real toll is nearly 370,000.

Nearly a quarter of the country is now on the highest level of alert, which requires some non-essential businesses to close and forces others to serve fewer customers at a time.

The federal Health Department said the capital is "red" on a color-coded alert system for the pandemic, but Mexico City officials claimed they were still on orange level, which allows wider business activity.

"We do not believe we should close [economic activities](#), but rather accelerate the pace of vaccination," Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said.

The alert colors are determined by case loads, hospital bed availability and the rate of change in those and other factors, and there have been discrepancies between state and federal ratings before.

The states of Nuevo Leon, Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Colima and Guerrero are also on red alert.

Hospitals across Mexico are now at 51% of capacity. But while cases

numbers have exploded, hospitalizations and deaths are lower than during the surge in January, which pushed some hospitals to their limits.

Mexico has never had a European-style strict lockdown, nor has it required [face masks](#), or testing or vaccinations for visitors.

Mexico has vaccinated 48 million people, or about 38% of the total population, with at least one dose.

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