

Swiss tighten Covid border controls

September 17 2021

Switzerland announced Friday that all travellers entering the country who have not been vaccinated against Covid-19 or recovered from the disease will need proof of a negative test.

Bern said the measures, which come into force on Monday, were a bid to prevent a spike in cases once people start returning from their autumn vacation, following a surge in Delta variant infections after the summer holidays.

"Anyone who has not been vaccinated or has not recovered must present a negative test result on entry," the government said in a statement, adding that after four to seven days in Switzerland, another test must be carried out, subject to a fee.

All travellers must also complete a locator form.

More than two million people and one million vehicles cross landlocked Switzerland's borders every day.

The test and entry form requirements do not apply to transit travellers, professional goods or transport drivers, cross-border commuters or people entering from areas just across the frontier.

Vaccination rates in the wealthy Alpine nation are lagging behind those of its neighbours, with only 53.3 percent of the population fully immunised.

Some 31 percent of intensive care unit beds are filled with Covid-19 patients.

Switzerland now requires people to show proof of vaccination, recovery or a negative test to go into bars and restaurants, cinemas, exhibitions and indoor sporting events.

From Monday, foreign visitors vaccinated abroad with a jab approved by the European Medicines Agency will be able to obtain a Swiss Covid certificate enabling them to enter restaurants and venues.

The restrictions are unpopular with sections of the Swiss population, and demonstrations—normally rare in Switzerland—are on the increase.

On Thursday evening, some 3,000-4,000 people marched in the capital Bern in opposition to the measures and restrictions.

Some attacked the fence surrounding the Federal Palace, seat of the government and parliament, and the police responded with water cannon and rubber bullets, Swiss news agency ATS reported.

"Anything that is an act of violence is condemned without restriction," Swiss President Guy Parmelin told a press conference on Friday.

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Citation: Swiss tighten Covid border controls (2021, September 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-09-swiss-tighten-covid-border.html>

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