

Israel to Reinstate Masks Outdoors, Restrict Events to Vaccinated Only Amid Delta Variant Surge

Proof of immunity against COVID to be required for entry to events with fewer than 100 people, masks to be mandatory at outdoor events with more than 100 people, and gov't to encourage private sector to work from home.



The coronavirus ward at Hillel Yaffeh Medical Center, Hadera, last month.
Credit: Amir Levy

Israel's coronavirus cabinet concluded a three-hour-long meeting on Tuesday by announcing a series of new COVID-19 restrictions, as the country plunged deeper into a post-vaccination delta variant wave. The new regulations, including limiting gatherings to those with proof of immunity and encouraging working from home, will go into effect on Sunday.

A "green passport" - a document showing that someone has either been vaccinated, recovered from the virus or recently tested negative for it - will now be required for entry to events with fewer than 100 people.

The coronavirus cabinet also recommended that private companies have employees work from home, while government ministries will have to reduce the number of employees working in the office to 50 percent.

Children, who have exempt from the so-called green passport requirement, will now have to show a negative test result before entering such events. People will have to wear masks even at outdoor events with more than 100 people.

Also on Tuesday, Defense Minister Benny Gantz signed a call-up order for 1,000 reservists to help the army deal with the spread of the virus. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett spoke with the heads of all the parties in the governing coalition and said that additional restrictions had to be imposed now, since otherwise, Israel will likely have 800 seriously ill patients in another 20 days or so.

Earlier Tuesday, the government announced that arrivals from 18 countries would have to quarantine for a week, regardless of vaccination status, beginning on August 11.

New coronavirus cases neared 4,000 on Tuesday, Health Ministry data showed, for the first time since early March. Israel diagnosed 3,818 new COVID cases on Monday, Israel also recorded a four-month high for patients in serious condition, with 221 people. The percentage of positive coronavirus tests is also steadily rising, with 3.78 percent of Monday's tests returning positive.

- All arrivals to Israel from U.S., Germany, France and 15 other nations to quarantine
- Israel's public health chief says evidence points to waning COVID vaccine immunity
- Israeli PM: Serious COVID cases to quadruple in 20 days, we must impose new restrictions

Israel is continuing to spearhead its COVID-19 booster vaccination campaign, with nearly 40,000 elderly citizens and people with underlying medical conditions receiving the third jab since the weekend.

Source:

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