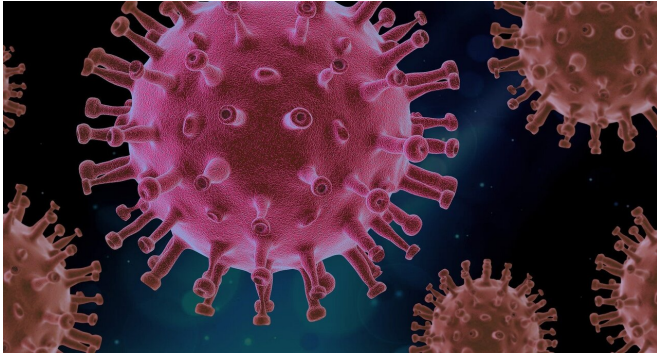


France reports 544 new coronavirus deaths, total toll 21,340: official

22 April 2020



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France on Wednesday reported 544 more deaths from COVID-19 in hospitals and nursing homes over the last 24 hours, but registered new falls in the total numbers of coronavirus patients.

The total toll from the epidemic in France has now risen to 21,340, top health official Jerome Salomon told reporters, while adding that there were now 365 fewer [coronavirus](#) patients in hospital and 215 fewer in intensive care compared with the day earlier.

The number of patients suffering with COVID-19 in intensive care in France has now fallen every day for two weeks in a row.

There are now 5,218 coronavirus patients in [intensive care](#) in France, down from a peak of 7,148 on April 8.

Salomon said that despite signs of improving trends in the data, the spread of the virus in France "remains at a high level and we need to respect the confinement".

France has been in lockdown since March 17 in a bid to slow the spread of the epidemic. President

Emmanuel Macron announced last week that the lockdown could begin to be eased from May 11.

Over the last days France has been abuzz with speculation over how the so-called "de-confinement" will proceed on May 11, with the government yet to unveil its concrete plan.

According to Macron, schools could gradually reopen then but cafes, cinemas and cultural venues would remain closed.

The president is due to hold a [video conference](#) on Friday with representatives of the tourism and restaurant sector and there has been speculation that bars and restaurants could be allowed to open from June 15.

But government spokeswoman Sibeth Ndiaye said she could not confirm this, adding that more time was needed "to work out the different scenarios for resuming activity".

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