Swiss told 'get a grip' as virus cases top 1,000-mark

October 7 2020

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Daily coronavirus cases in Switzerland jumped over the 1,000 mark on Wednesday for the first time since April 1 as the Swiss were urged to "get a grip".

Recorded infections in the wealthy Alpine nation of 8.5 million people only previously topped 1,000 between March 16 and April 1, at the height of its COVID-19 outbreak.

Faced with the recent jump in case numbers, Health Minister Alain Berset on Tuesday urged the Swiss to "get a grip" by respecting physical distancing and hand hygiene in private as well as in public.

The situation is "not easy at the moment", he said, according to Switzerland's ATS news agency.

In order to avoid closing down establishments, "we have to stick to the ground rules", he said.

Birthday gatherings, private parties and slackening diligence when it comes to distancing, mask-wearing and hand hygiene "work against us", Berset stressed.

Switzerland recorded 1,074 new cases on Wednesday, pushing the overall total to nearly 57,600 cases and 1,788 deaths.

"These figures are worrying," Professor Didier Trono, head of the Laboratory of Virology and Genetics at the EPFL science and technology university in Lausanne, told public broadcaster RTS.

Pointing to other European countries where a second wave of infections began several weeks ago, he stressed "there is no reason to think that the Swiss are different, nor that the virus in Switzerland is different."

Despite bordering northern Italy—the early epicentre of the outbreak in Europe—Switzerland was not hit as hard by COVID-19 deaths and did not impose as strict a lockdown as some other European states.

Daily case numbers hit a very low and stable level in mid-June.

Infections rose consistently after that, before the big jump in recent days.

Switzerland reopened its football stadiums and ice hockey arenas to big crowds again on October 1. Arenas can be two-thirds full and fans must wear masks.

Across Switzerland, the case rate over the previous 14 days is 74.2 per 100,000 people.

However, the picture is varied across the country, with the cantons of Geneva and Vaud, which contains Lausanne, the hardest hit.

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