Cyprus to return to lockdown conditions to stem virus spread

8 January 2021

A man and woman wearing face masks walk at a boat harbor during Epiphany day celebrations at village of Zygi village in southern coast of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021. All the outdoors Epiphany ceremonies across the island canceled for the covid-19 measures. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)

Cyprus is returning to lockdown for the remainder of the month, including daytime restrictions on movement and a shuttering of schools, after the government conceded Friday that a nightly curfew and other existing measures weren't enough to curtail the spread of the coronavirus.

Health Minister Constantinos Ioannou said intensive care units treating COVID-19 patients have reached their limits and tougher restrictions are needed to prevent "people dying helpless because we don't have available beds." The new measures take effect Sunday, he said.

Individuals will only be permitted to go out twice each day with approval required. Schools—with the exception of kindergarten, pre-school or those serving students with special needs—will be closed and teaching moved online.

The country's 9:00 p.m. -5:00 a.m. curfew is being extended to the end of the month, as is a ban on public and private gatherings.

Hair and beauty salons, theaters, cinemas, shopping malls, gyms, nightclubs, restaurants and playgrounds will also be closed. Churches will be allowed to hold services without worshippers, and only first division soccer teams will be allowed to continue playing.

However, the new lockdown isn't as strict as the one the government imposed in April and May. Although civil servants will be obligated to work from home, a maximum of 20 employees are being allowed to work at the premises of private companies. Families will also be allowed three-hour excursions to the beach for exercise.

A man with children wearing face masks walk at a boat harbor during Epiphany day celebrations at village of Zygi village in southern coast of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021. All the outdoors Epiphany ceremonies across the island canceled for the covid-19 measures. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)

Infections have multiplied much faster in Cyprus

during the last couple of months compared to earlier in the year, partly because of the new coronavirus variant first identified in Britain, Ioannou said.

Ioannou said COVID-19 testing will be ramped up, although he acknowledged that the Mediterranean island nation's immunization program is proceeding at a slow pace because of the low number of vaccine doses the country is receiving—6,800 per week. Cyprus has a population of about 900,000.

Some 4,500 nursing home residents and front-line medical staff have already been vaccinated.

Ioannou said if vaccine shipments remain unchanged, 60,000-70,000 will be vaccinated by the end of May. He said the country could reduce the percentage of hospitalizations by 80% if around 150,000 people were inoculated by mid-April.

A man sits at the rocks at a boat harbor during Epiphany day celebrations at village of Zygi in southern coast of the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021. All the outdoors Epiphany ceremonies across the island canceled for the covid-19 measures. (AP Photo/Petros Karadjias)

Cyprus has reported more than 26,000 confirmed cases and 140 deaths in the pandemic.

The current 14-day cumulative diagnosis rate for COVID-19 is 614.3 per 100,000 population.

APA citation: Cyprus to return to lockdown conditions to stem virus spread (2021, January 8) retrieved 2 June 2022 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-01-cyprus-lockdown-conditions-stem-virus.html