

Coronavirus COVID-19 (/en/)

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Face mask requirement and travel restrictions lifted as of 23 May (/en/news/occ-2005/)

20-05-2022

The coronavirus barometer, which has been switched to code yellow since March of this year, has been deactivated. This has been decided by the Consultative Committee. As a result, the requirement to wear a face mask on public transport and to complete the Passenger Locator Form for most trips will be lifted as of Monday 23 May.

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The Consultative Committee has established that infections and the number of new hospital admissions are following a downward trend. The reproduction rate for infections and hospital admissions remains at less than 1, which suggests the virus is circulating at a much slower pace. In addition, the number of critical care beds has been fluctuating around 100 for quite some time, remaining well below the threshold of 300.

1. Face mask requirement

Face masks will no longer be mandatory except in hospitals, surgeries (at the doctor's office) and pharmacies. It will therefore no longer be mandatory to wear a face mask on public transport.

However, wearing a face mask will still be recommended in very busy places or in healthcare environments such as residential care centres or at a dental practice, physiotherapist, psychologist or speech therapist. Proper ventilation of indoor spaces will also continue to be strongly recommended as it is a strong weapon against virus transmission and is generally good for our well-being, health and productivity.

2. Travel

Non-essential travel from outside the European Union will no longer be banned. Testing on days 1 and 7 and the 10-day quarantine period will no longer be mandatory nor will it be necessary to present:

- a Passenger Locator Form;
- a valid vaccination, recovery or test certificate.

However, this will not apply to people travelling from a country with a new variant of concern; they must continue to respect the current rules.

3. Crisis management ('pandemic preparedness').

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lines of defence have substantially been made stronger, among others with regard to testing, contact tracing, vaccination, ventilation, healthcare capacity, pandemic surveillance (including genome sequencing) and mental well-being. The Committee wants to embed this defence permanently and has requested advice from the Covid Focal Point which will work closely with the federated entities to this end.

The IMC Public Health will investigate whether and how an additional booster dose can provide better protection against possible new waves. The Minister of Public Health will continue to explore the epidemiological value of the Coronavirus Certificate and its place within the barometer.

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