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Moscow Elderly Told to Stay Home or Escape to Countryside

By AFP

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Young people have also been advised to "avoid personal communication with older people" to prevent infection from spreading, and to help their older neighbors who live alone. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

On Monday, the mayor of Moscow told older Russians to either stay at home or escape to their country houses to avoid exposure to the coronavirus.

In a video on his website, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said that those over the age of 65 "must comply with an at-home regimen" between March 26 and April 14. "You may not like it and even oppose it, but trust me, it is dictated by sincere concern for you," said the mayor, who has been tasked with heading Russia's overall coronavirus response.

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Russia has so far reported 438 infections, the majority of them in Moscow, the country's

largest city with more than 12 million inhabitants. The country has gradually tightened restrictions, halting cultural and sports events, switching schools to distance learning, and closing fitness clubs. It has also closed borders to almost all non-citizens.

However, unlike many countries in Asia and Europe, the national government has not ordered any confinement.

"You can go to the shop or the pharmacy only when you need to," Sobyanin said, listing a number to call if help is needed.

"The best thing to do, if you can, is to go to your dacha, especially since the weather promises to be warm."

Many big-city residents in Russia have country homes known as dachas, usually simple cottages with gardens on small plots of land, where they go at weekends and in summer.

Sobyanin did not say whether non-compliant pensioners would be punished, but says that those in the age group complying with the rules will be compensated with a total of 4,000 rubles ($50). He also advised young people to "avoid personal communication with older people" to prevent infection from spreading, and to help their older neighbors who live alone.

One person who was infected with the virus in Russia has died but officials are not linking the death to the virus.

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