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Moscow to Treat Respiratory Infections as Coronavirus: Official

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Moscow, a city of more than 12 million people, has emerged as the epicenter of the contagion in Russia with more than 16,000 coronavirus cases. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

Moscow, the epicenter of Russia's coronavirus outbreak, will begin treating respiratory infections as Covid-19 as the disease shows no signs of slowing down, a senior city official said Thursday.

The city's new directive comes a week after its decision to treat all pneumonia cases as potential coronavirus patients because the virus often causes pneumonia. Federal officials have also authorized Covid-19 diagnoses without lab tests as Russia's relatively low infection rates drew suspicion and tests have had a high share of false negatives.

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"The virus is already actively spreading inside the city. In these conditions, it's difficult to distinguish between early signs of coronavirus and a simple acute viral respiratory infection,"

deputy mayor Anastasia Rakova said.

“That’s why we decided that all respiratory infection cases will be considered as suspected coronavirus [cases],” the state-run RIA Novosti news agency quoted Rakova as saying.

These patients and people who live with them will be placed under 14-day quarantine, she was quoted by The Bell news website as saying. If they develop complications, the patients will be sent to one of 45 converted clinics for CT scans, blood tests and electrocardiograms.

Those who violate self-isolation rules will also face fines extended to housebound coronavirus patients, according to Moscow’s coronavirus crisis center.

On Friday, Rakova said Moscow could reach its peak in coronavirus infections in the next two to three weeks.

Moscow, a city of more than 12 million people, has emerged as the epicenter of the contagion in Russia with more than 16,000 coronavirus cases.

Russia has reported a total of 27,938 cases, making it the world’s 14th most-affected country, and 232 deaths as of Thursday.

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