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Russia Reinstates Mask Mandate, Restricts Nightlife to Stop Virus Spread

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Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency

Russia has reinstated a nationwide mask mandate starting Wednesday amid a record-setting second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, consumer safety watchdog Rospotrebnadzor has announced.

Russians will be required to wear masks in all crowded places, including public transport, taxis, parking lots and elevators, Rospotrebnadzor said Tuesday.

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Russia imposed a national mask mandate and other quarantine rules to slow the spread of Covid-19 at the start of its outbreak in spring. Moscow lifted the mandate in mid-July as Covid-19 cases began to decrease, though health officials urged Russians to continue wearing masks to prevent the spread of the disease.

Rospotrebnadzor has also recommended that all restaurants and other late-night establishments close between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m.

The restrictions come days after Moscow launched a contact-tracing system requiring restaurant and nightclub visitors to register their phone numbers and scan a QR code.

Also starting last week, the Moscow public transportation system began cracking down on its rules by banning passengers without masks or gloves.

The new nationwide rules come amid widespread reports of hospital bed, medication and staff shortages across the country during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Russia pushed past the 1.5 million mark for Covid-19 infections over the weekend and set a daily record of 17,347 new cases Monday.

The Kremlin noted Monday that the second wave of the Covid-19 outbreak has shifted from Moscow, which continues to see around one-third of all new infections, to the regions.

Rospotrebnadzor forecast that the Covid-19 pandemic will likely not decline until the summer of 2021.

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