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Who Pays for the PCR Test on the First Date?: The Rules of Moscow Covid Dating

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A slew of new pandemic restrictions in Russia's capital is forcing many to evaluate the do's and don'ts of dating. **Gavriil Grigorov / TASS**

Dua Lipa might have written the new rules of surviving a breakup in 2018 — but now, Muscovites are navigating the new rules of dating during a record Covid-19 surge.

Starting Monday, Moscow — which has already closed the city's nightclubs and dance floors as the Delta variant sweeps the city — will require all restaurant and bar patrons to present an official QR code that proves their vaccination, immunity or negative PCR test result.

Moscow IT firm Synell's CEO Denis Gorskin said the company wanted to draw attention to the latest Covid-19 surge in a light-hearted way — and with just "a grain of self-irony" — by writing an etiquette rulebook for pandemic dating.

According to the rulebook, the man should pay for his date's Covid test before the first date —

but she shouldn't use this test to go on dates with anyone else, Gorskin told the independent Dozhd broadcaster.

“It is much safer to have one partner during the global pandemic,” the rulebook says.

According to the guide, all untested partners should keep their distance, literally: at least 1.5 meters, according to WHO recommendations.

“Let soulful conversations bring you closer, not your bodies,” the guide says.

Synell's guide, whose recommendations follow WHO and Russian Health Ministry guidelines in addition to its employees' own observations, comes with illustrations and practical advice accompanied by scannable QR codes.

Not everyone agrees on the etiquette for dating in Moscow amid the current restrictions, however.

Ethics coach Albina Kholgova said she disagrees with the idea that a man should pay for a woman’s Covid test.

“When a man invites a woman to a restaurant, he does not pay for her dress, shoes or makeup. He simply treats her to dinner. Therefore, there can be no requests from a woman to pay for the test," Kholgova told the Moscow 24 news portal.

Since Russian society remains divided on the question of compulsory vaccination, Kholgova recommends finding compromise whenever possible.

“If one of the parties forgot to clarify whether the other has a QR code, one must offer to dine out at the terrace,” Kholgova said.

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