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Russia Sees Second Day of Record Coronavirus Cases, Fatalities

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Russian hospitals are almost completed full with coronavirus patients, doctors have said. **Yevgeny Sofiychuk/TASS**

Russia reported a new record number of both daily coronavirus deaths and infections Friday, as health officials warned the country faces a "near-critical" situation and pleaded with Russians to get vaccinated against the virus.

The government's coronavirus information center reported 999 fatalities over the past 24 hours, up from Thursday's record of 985 deaths.

Russia has now set a new record number of fatalities for 13 of the last 17 days.

The country also reported an all-time high of 32,196 new coronavirus cases, up from the previous record 31,299 infections reported Thursday.

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Denis Protsenko, the chief doctor of Moscow's main Covid-19 hospital, warned that beds are filling up with critical patients and called on a hesitant population to get vaccinated.

Only a third of Russians have been vaccinated against the coronavirus, and opinion polls show more than half of the population do not plan on getting a shot.

"People, it's true, the coronavirus is not a joke or fiction," Protsenko wrote on his Telegram channel. "It's amazing that you still need to convince people of that in the second year of the pandemic."

Earlier in the week Russia's Health Minister said more than 90% of the country's hospital beds for coronavirus patients were occupied.

Surging cases and fatalities puts Russia at odds with the global trend of a pandemic showing some signs of a retreat. The World Health Organization (WHO) said earlier this week that global deaths from Covid-19 are falling and have reached their lowest levels in almost a year.

The government's official death toll since the start of the pandemic stands at 221,313 — Europe's highest — while Russia's total excess fatality count during the same period is at least 660,000.

Russia's total virus caseload is the fifth-highest in the world at 7.9 million.

The Kremlin has ruled out imposing a lockdown to help stop the spread of the virus. Dozens of Russian regions have introduced vaccine mandates for certain categories of workers and vaccine passports for entry into crowded indoor venues in an attempt to boost weak uptake.

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