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Russia Drops Remaining Covid-19 Restrictions

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Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency

Russia has canceled its nationwide mask mandate, federal health authorities announced Friday, as the coronavirus pandemic has been pushed into the background amid the country's military campaign in Ukraine.

Rospotrebnadzor, Russia's consumer protection watchdog, said the country's caseload has "steadily" declined over the past four months. It claimed that 93% of currently confirmed cases are either mild or asymptomatic.

"Due to the continuing decrease in the intensity of the epidemic process, Rospotrebnadzor is suspending the previously imposed restrictions," it said in a statement.

In addition to lifting the mask mandate, Russia will now allow restaurants and cafes to remain open after hours.

Russia has gone through five Covid-19 waves since the pandemic began, with the latest peak

of nearly 204,000 cases recorded on Feb. 11.

The number of registered infections has dropped in the months since, reaching 3,100 on Thursday.

Coronavirus deaths decreased in the spring of 2022, but dozens of people die from the illness every day in Russia.

The Russian regions, which have been tasked by President Vladimir Putin with determining their own response measures during the pandemic, had begun lifting some restrictions in recent months as caseloads fell.

Moscow, the epicenter of the pandemic within Russia, dropped many of its remaining Covid-19 regulations including a citywide mask mandate in mid-March.

Rospotrebnadzor said its experts do not foresee a spike in Covid-19 infections caused by the Omicron variant this summer.

It warned, however, that the mask mandate and restaurant curfews could be reinstated if Covid-19 infections start to rise again.

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