



NATIONAL COMMISSIONER OF THE
ICELANDIC POLICE
DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL PROTECTION
AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Applies to: The media, almannavarnir.is, Administration and Chief Epidemiologist's contacts.

STATUS REPORT

Date: 14.04.2020 Time: 16:00 Location: Coordination Centre / Directorate of Health / Chief Epidemiologist

Emergency / Distress Phase: COVID-19

Developments

Dissemination of information, making of instructions and advice to the public, to institutions and enterprises. All instructions can be found on the [Directorate of Health](#) website, the [National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police](#) website and the covid.is information website.

Limitations on social gatherings and school operations to be gradually relaxed as of 4 May.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Justice held a press conference today and announced the government's next steps in the fight against COVID-19. The Minister of Health discussed her decision to start relaxing the limitations on social gatherings and school operations. The change will come into force on 4 May. The Chief Epidemiologist has therefore suggested that the limitations be relaxed in stages and reviewed every three to four weeks. [See further on the Government Offices website.](#)

Statistical information for Iceland

The number of people in Iceland with confirmed infections is currently 1,720, with 723 in isolation. There are a total of 1,375 domestic infections and 8 of unknown origin. A total of 36,339 samples have been taken, including 851 in the last 24 hours. Eight of the people who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in Iceland have passed away.

[According to the National University Hospital](#) there are currently 37 patients in the hospital with COVID-19, of which 7 are in intensive care and 4 on respirators. 735 are being monitored by the COVID-19 outpatient unit, including 82 children who are being monitored by the Children's Hospital. 1014 individuals have recovered and 52 individuals have been discharged from the hospital.

Today's information press conference was cancelled due to the press conference in which the Prime Minister, Minister of Health and Minister of Justice announced the government's next steps in the fight against COVID-19. The change will come into force on 4 May.

From the press conference:

Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir opened the conference, saying that in a global context, the measures taken in Iceland had been strict right from the start. In this context she referred to the number of people who have been diagnosed, the attention the contact tracing efforts have garnered, and the use of quarantining and isolation. "We can all say that we know someone who has been under quarantine, or we have been there ourselves," Prime Minister Jakobsdóttir said. These strict measures have had the result that the infection rate is dropping, but we have not yet won the battle. Prime Minister Jakobsdóttir likened the situation to climbing a mountain and said the final slope was yet to be ascended. At this point, it is tempting to sit down to enjoy one's packed meal and not go on to climb the next peak, but this is not something we can do. "We must also finish the last slope and that means 3 more weeks of the current measures," the Prime Minister said. Antibody screening will also be conducted, hopefully later this month, in order to

discover how widespread the antibody is. This may prove to be an important contribution to the research of and fight against the virus. Prime Minister Jakobsdóttir also said that while scaling the mountain, there is a risk of hurrying back down once the peak has been reached, but this will result in slipping and falling on one's face. During the relaxing of the measures, we will be taking few but large steps, and we need to have the patience to descend the slope slowly enough. As of yet, we do not know enough about the virus, which means that there is an uncertainty about its behaviour and what effects it will on the community throughout this year. Finally, Prime Minister Jakobsdóttir said that the big goal was to overcome the virus so that the nation can exit the restrictions together. In this regard she made special mention of senior citizens and nursing home residents.

Minister of Health Svandís Svavarsdóttir said the epidemic had been a learning process for all of us and a stress test of the Icelandic social infrastructure. "But since one also learns from the triad's press conferences I want to give praise and thanks – thanks to the triad for taking the lead and always being upbeat. This role has been utterly invaluable to all of us, this informing us from day to day of what we have, that we do not have answers to everything, having the strength and sense of humour to encourage the nation to stay strong," Minister Svavarsdóttir said. She added that this task was among the biggest we have ever faced as a community. Iceland is a small country and we are able to stick together when times are tough, as close as we are to natural threats and disasters. The Coronavirus is a threat that is not of our making and it creates its own time-line. Minister Svavarsdóttir read her memorandum on the relaxing of the Chief Epidemiologist's restrictions. She said that it had been our fortune to have hitherto followed the advice of our best experts, and we would continue to do so. "We intend to trust in each other and thus continue to base the next steps on trust," Minister Svavarsdóttir said. She then gave an overview of the changes that will be made on 4. May:

The social gathering number restriction will be 50 individuals instead of the current 20. The 2-metre distancing rule will remain in place.

The operation of preschools and primary and lower secondary level schools will return to normal.

Upper secondary schools and universities will operate under the principle of having no more than 50 individuals in the same space at the same time.

Various services: Hair salons, massage parlours, physiotherapy facilities, beauty salons, museums and similar services can resume operations, but shall keep a 2-metre distance between clients to the extent possible.

Health-care services: All health-care activities that do not entail elective surgeries or other invasive procedures will be permitted. Dental practices will also be able to resume operations.

Outdoor organised sports activities for children at the preschool and primary and lower secondary level will be permitted with the following restrictions:

- No more than 50 individuals together in one group.
- Keep to the 2-metre rule as much as possible, especially for older children.

Other outdoor organised sports activities are permitted with the following restrictions:

- No more than four individuals to train or play together.
- Touching is not permitted and the 2-metre distancing between individuals shall be respected.
- The use of shared equipment shall be kept at a minimum, and if used, it shall be disinfected between uses.

A few things that will remain unchanged:

- Exemptions for economically important enterprises will remain unchanged.
- As before, 100 persons can be admitted to grocery stores and pharmacies at a time, under specific conditions.
- Public swimming pools and fitness centres will remain closed.
- Rules regarding night clubs, pubs, amusement arcades and the like will remain unchanged and these places will therefore remain closed.
- The Director of Health's instructions from 23 March regarding elective surgeries and other invasive procedures will remain unchanged.

Minister of Justice Áslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir said that the civil protection authorities have achieved a lot in the last several weeks, the system has functioned well and the outcome has been good, but the emergency phase will remain in place while the restrictions apply. She said it was a cause for joy that the schools are going back into full operation, since all restrictions and measures have a tremendous effect. Other effects must always be evaluated, such as the social ones. In this regard Minister Sigurbjörnsdóttir especially referred to violence, anxiety and sadness throughout the community, that need to be addressed. She said that the will to clarify all the steps taken during the measures was in place, and that the spreading of good information was considered to be very important. Minister Sigurbjörnsdóttir discussed the travel restrictions and said that there were no proposals to increase them. Various scenarios are being looked at, but it all really depends on what the situation and reactions of other countries will be like. There are travel restrictions in place at the Schengen outer border and it has been proposed that the member states extend them until 15 May, and Iceland will follow this proposal. She chimed in with the Prime Minister and Minister of Health, saying that people's reactions had been admirable and the nation had stuck together in fighting this unwelcome visitor.

Chief Epidemiologist Þórólfur Guðnason reviewed the day's numbers regarding the spread of the virus, the infection rate, quarantine and isolation. He gave an overview of the epidemic since the first infection was diagnosed on 28 February, but since then 1,720 persons have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and 8 persons have passed away from the disease. The epidemic reached its peak around a week ago, and since then it has been decreasing at a fast and steady rate. "We have the social measures and the power of cooperation of the public, enterprises and authorities to thank for that," Dr. Guðnason said. He said that although there have not been a great number of community-acquired infections, the pressure on the hospitals has been considerable. There are various limitations on people's daily lives and efforts are being made to relax these, but Dr. Guðnason said it was important for this to happen slowly, so as to prevent a resurgence of the epidemic. The plans introduced by the Minister of Health today are an important first step and it is clear that many people are hoping that it will be possible to lift various restrictions. However, it is important to take the relaxing of restrictions slowly, because there is a large group of people in the community that is still susceptible to the infection. It is important to protect the residents of Iceland from outside infections, and there are various ideas being discussed as to how it might be possible to somehow limit the arrival of tourists to the country and to limit the travels of Icelandic residents as well, keeping in mind that the epidemic is mostly due to Icelandic residents travelling abroad, and not because of foreign tourists.

Dr. Guðnason urged the public to keep up its solidarity and continue the good work that has been going on – "The power of cooperation between us and the public will be the key element for us to be able to rise up and beat this viral infection," he added.

Information sharing and projects

The Civil Protection Authorities' Coordination Centre coordinates all action and disseminates information regarding COVID-19 all over the country.

The Red Cross Due to the strain on the Red Cross telephone helpline 1717 and the net chat at 1717.is, the [Ministry of Social Affairs](#) has decided to support the service. The support will boost up the helpline and net chat to aid people, such as families, children and young people, people with disabilities, the elderly and people of foreign origin during these unprecedented times. Phone calls to the 1717 line have tripled from the previous numbers. The calls are now both longer and more difficult.

The website www.covid.is

Statistical information about the disease is updated once a day and published at 13:00h on the covid.is website.

The website contains information about the measures that have been taken in Iceland due to the COVID-19 disease.

Upcoming:

- Press conferences are held every day at 14:03h.
- The next COVID-19 coordination meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 April at 9:00h.

Status

Iceland – today's status

More info <https://www.covid.is/data>

Coronavirus – Global spread

According to Johns Hopkins, **1,934,583 individual cases** of COVID-19 have been confirmed today and **120,914 individuals** have died. An additional **464,995 individuals** have already recovered from the illness. According to the ECDC, the epidemic is currently considered to be a moderate public health threat for healthy individuals and very high threat for older adults and individuals with chronic underlying conditions. Cf. the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\)](#) website for information on the development in each country. Cf. the ECDC risk assessment.

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