

Beat: Health

Spain bans smoking in the street, outdoor parties and nightlife

Faced with the increase in infections

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USPA NEWS - The Spanish Ministry of Health and the regions unanimously agreed this Friday, in an extraordinary meeting, to act in coordination in Public Health in the face of the increase in cases of COVID-19. They approved eleven control measures in seven different areas, three recommendations and an indication of observance of the aspects included in the 'Early Response Plan in a COVID-19 pandemic control scenario,' which include the prohibition of smoking in the street, open-air parties and the mandatory closure of nightclubs and bars. A fatal blow, according to businessmen in the sector, to nightlife.

"Coordinated health measures have been formally declared that will be adopted jointly by all the autonomous communities and cities," explained the Minister of Health, Salvador Illa, who added that "this once again shows the shared work and coordinated efforts that we have been doing, since the beginning of the pandemic, to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and protect the health of all citizens."

These measures focus on the control of transmission in the areas that are currently the origin of the epidemic outbreaks with the greatest impact and risk, and on those that can control the community transmission associated with those outbreaks that are detected through the National Network of Epidemiological Surveillance.

Nightlife, health officials say, is currently the origin of the epidemic outbreaks with the highest number of associated cases, an average of 31, and these outbreaks are also the origin of a large part of current community transmission and of cases in several regions. For this reason, one of the agreed measures consists of the closure of discos, dance halls and cocktail bars with and without live musical performances. And, in a complementary way, in hotels, restaurants, terraces and beach bars / restaurants, the minimum interpersonal distance of 1.5 meters must be guaranteed in the bar service and also between tables, with a maximum of 10 people per table. The closing time of the establishments will be 1:00 a.m. at most, without being able to admit new clients from 24:00 p.m.

Another of the fields of action are mass events. In these, being of a planned nature, a risk assessment must be carried out by the health authority in accordance with the provisions of the document 'Recommendations for mass events and activities in the context of the new normality due to Covid-19 in Spain,' agreed upon in the Public Health Commission of the Interterritorial Council of the National Health System. Based on this evaluation, each event must have the authorization of the autonomous community.

Social health centers

The social health centers, which are the area in which there has been the greatest increase in outbreaks detected in recent weeks and given that the residents in them are the most important and priority vulnerable group in terms of risk reduction measures, focus another three of the agreed measures. On the one hand, carry out PCR tests on all new admissions in residential social health centers, with a maximum of 72 hours in advance. It will also be done to employees who return from leave and vacations, and to new workers who join. Likewise, visits will be limited to one person per resident, taking extreme measures of prevention, and with a maximum duration of one hour a day. And, the staggering of them will be guaranteed throughout the day. These measures may be excepted in the case of people who are in the end-of-life process. In addition, the exits of the residents will be limited to the maximum.

The approved document states, on the other hand, that in the event of an epidemic outbreak, screening will be carried out with PCR tests in those populations at risk and potentially exposed (for example: residents in social-health centers, neighborhoods with community transmission, educational centers, blocks of affected homes, vulnerable groups, etc.). For its part, regarding the unauthorized consumption of alcohol on public roads, controls will be reinforced to prevent it as well as those other activities not allowed on public roads. In this sense, the autonomous communities and municipalities will apply the corresponding sanctions.

And, in the consumption of tobacco and electronic cigarettes, the obligation to use a mask may only be exempted during the consumption of tobacco or electronic cigarettes on public roads or in outdoor spaces, in the cases in which the maintenance of a distance from other people of at least 2 meters.

The agreement includes three recommendations: carry out periodically, and as far as possible at least every two weeks, PCR tests on workers in social and health centers who are in direct contact with residents, recommend to the public the limitation of social encounters outside the stable coexistence group and at the same time that these are limited to a maximum of 10 people. The document specifies that the means and capacities of the health systems will be guaranteed to comply with the provisions of the Early Response Plan in a scenario of control of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Salvador Illa stressed the importance of complying with the prevention measures implemented and insisted that it is necessary to be disciplined: "We cannot ignore that the virus is circulating among us and that we must be very rigorous as long as we do not have a vaccine," said the Minister. The Declaration of Coordinated Actions will remain in force until it is expressly revoked by the Minister of Health, with the prior agreement of the Interterritorial Council of the National Health System, with an audience of all regions.

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