



Government of the Netherlands

More breathing space in lockdown, but caution remains

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Please note: this news item was published on 23 February. Read more about [the current approach to tackling coronavirus in the Netherlands](#).

The coronavirus measures are testing everyone's resilience, both physically and mentally. The longer the crisis continues, the more difficult it becomes for everyone. Now that a year has passed, the pandemic's social and economic effects are mounting dramatically.

The government remains focused on protecting people in at-risk groups, and ensuring healthcare remains accessible to those in need. The rise of the British coronavirus variant means that the daily infection rate is now dropping less, or even increasing, compared with a few weeks ago. A third wave of infections seems unavoidable.

Nevertheless, we are now in a phase where we can afford to take a slightly greater risk – albeit a limited and carefully considered risk. The lockdown and curfew will remain in force at least up to and including 15 March, but secondary schools and institutions of secondary vocational education (MBO) will partially reopen from 1 March. In addition, from 3 March the government will relax the lockdown in the following ways: young people aged 26 and below will be able to train together outside at sports venues again; contact-based professions can be practised again; and retailers may open for shopping-by-appointment.

Education

From 1 March, secondary schools and institutions of secondary vocational education (MBO) will partially reopen. In practice, this means that all secondary school pupils will attend school at least one day a week, subject to certain conditions. For now, MBO students will attend one day a week. As with primary schools, the government wants to avoid a situation in which secondary schools and MBO institutions need to close again in the future.

It is vital that schools and parents do everything possible to limit the number of contacts as much as possible. For some time now, anyone working in the education sector has been able to get tested with priority status, and that will not change.

Centres for out-of-school care (BSO) must stay closed, as opening them would lead to extra contact between pupils from different schools.

Contact-based professions

People performing contact-based professions, such as hairdressers and masseurs, will be able to practise again from 3 March 2021. Customers must make a reservation and must be asked if they have any symptoms that could point to COVID-19. It is also important to wear a face mask and, where possible, to stay 1.5 metres apart.

The relaxation of this measure will also apply to driving instructors. From 3 March, people will be able to take driving lessons again, and the practical driving test will be available to anyone. The government is exploring ways to enable driving students to safely take the theory test at the earliest possible opportunity.

The basic hygiene measures will of course continue to apply, and you must stay at home if you have symptoms of COVID-19.

Sex workers may not practise their profession at this time.

Outdoor sport

From 3 March, people aged 26 and below will be able to train outside at sports venues in groups of more than two people. Although competitions are still prohibited, they will be able to train with their own team from the same club. This was previously possible only for people aged 18 and below.

Shopping by appointment

From 3 March, shops will be able to receive customers by appointment. Shops will be able to receive 2 customers per floor at a time. Customers must make an appointment at least four hours in advance. Each customer slot must be a minimum of 10 minutes. This is to prevent contact between customers in the case of rapid customer turnover. And of course, the basic rules apply at all times: wear a face mask, stay 1.5 metres apart, follow the basic hygiene measures and stay at home if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Shopping by appointment may offer a way forward to small-scale retailers in particular.

Curfew

The curfew will be extended until 04.30 on 15 March 2021.

With the curfew in force, people are not permitted to be outdoors between 21.00 and 04.30. The curfew conditions have not changed. From 3 March, students taking practical lessons (and their teachers) and adult education students in their exam year will be exempt from the curfew.

Flight ban

To reduce the risk of virus mutations spreading, on 23 January the government announced a flight ban on passenger flights from the United Kingdom, South Africa, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Cabo Verde, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. This ban will be extended until at least Thursday 4 March. The government has asked the Outbreak Management Team to advise on the partial or full extension of this ban. The current exemptions, affecting a small number of travellers, including medical personnel, are still in effect.

Lockdown

The aim of the lockdown is to prevent people from coming into contact with each other wherever possible. Less contact means fewer infections. So stay at home and work from home as much as possible. Only go outside to shop for essentials, to get medical or other assistance for yourself or to care for others or animals, to get some fresh air or to go to work or school if working or learning remotely is not possible. If you do decide to receive visitors, make sure you have no more than one visitor per day, not including children under 13. You should not visit more than one other household per day either.

On Monday 8 March the government will assess what measures are necessary as from 16 March.

Pay extra attention to the basic rules

By relaxing the lockdown somewhat we are taking a risk. This requires us to pay extra attention to following the basic rules. That includes the hygiene rules, such as frequent handwashing, sneezing into your elbow and wearing a face mask wherever required. It also means staying 1.5 metres away from others and avoiding busy places. It's also essential – now more than ever – that you get tested and stay at home, even if you experience only mild symptoms. And if you test positive for COVID-19 you must self-quarantine together with everyone else in your household. This is the only way we can get coronavirus under control and gradually enjoy more freedom.

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