

On epidemiological safety measures from 15 November

Published: 09.11.2021.



Today, 9 November, the Cabinet of Ministers approved amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers' Order Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation*, determining epidemiological safety requirements from 15 November, when the previously set period of strengthened security measures will end.

Given that the epidemiological situation continues to show a high prevalence of Covid-19, safety measures determined in the country should be reviewed with caution. Although the prevalence curves indicate a declining rate of prevalence, the spread of Covid-19 is still significantly higher than at the time when the emergency situation was declared in the country. Therefore, from 15 November, the requirements that were set from 11 October this year will be maintained to a general extent.

Trade and services

From 15 November, all services are expected to be provided only in an epidemiologically safe environment, with the exception of essential services, which may also be provided to persons without vaccination or recovery certificates. Also, without vaccination or recovery certificates, it will be possible to visit shops selling basic necessities with an area of less than 1,500 m², the rest of the points of sale will operate only in an epidemiologically safe manner.

Quarantine conditions

The Order clarifies the procedure for compliance with quarantine requirements for those employees vaccinated against Covid-19 or recovered from the virus, as well as for students in educational institutions. It is planned that these persons may not undergo home quarantine to perform work duties and attend on-site studies if the head of the institution provides screening with antigen tests for the employee or learner who is the contact person each time before commencing of the workday or shift or on-site school day for seven days after contact with an infected person. This risk is justified because vaccinated or recovered people will be screened with antigen tests every day for seven days before starting work or studies. In this case, these persons will not be quarantined at home, but will continue to perform their duties. However, such an exception applies only to the performance of

work duties and the provision of on-site education. This means that outside their job responsibilities, these persons will not be able to attend any public or social events.

Work after 15 November

To prevent the situation that employees of the state, municipal and capital companies, as well as employees in the private sector who have started vaccination and who have not yet obtained a vaccination certificate due to objective reasons shall be fired from work, the amendments provide for a transitional period for people who have started vaccination against Covid-19 by 15 November 2021 and have not yet obtained a vaccination certificate. It is stipulated that in cases where the vaccination process is started before 15 November, employees may continue to perform their duties by carrying out regular testing for Covid-19. The costs of the tests will be covered by the employee from his/her own resources or could be paid by the employer.

Education

From 15 November, 4th to 12th grade students will resume on-site studying. At the same time, it is envisaged that in the implementation of the educational process at the basic education level, it is ensured that the flows of learners of different groups, classes or courses do not overlap - they are not in the same room at the same time, nor do they overlap outside the classroom during breaks. This requirement regarding the non-overlapping of groups, classes or courses of learners in one study room may not be applied at the secondary education level according to the specifics of the educational program. It is permissible to implement a pre-school education program in joint groups from one educational institution, ensuring as much as possible that learners in the combined group do not change. The exception at the secondary education level applies, for example, to the new national general secondary education standard for the implementation of advanced courses in grades 11 and 12, in frame of which it is required for the students from several classes to overlap, without maintaining the class "bubble" as it is not possible to implement advanced courses in each class separately (taking into account the specifics of advanced courses, provision of pedagogical staff, etc.). The same applies to vocational education.

Sports

In the field of sports after the period of strengthened security measures, generally requirements that were determined from the 11 October to 20 October remain in force, at the same time attributing the operation in the epidemiologically safe environment (green mode) to the Latvian national team (including youth and junior), Latvian Olympic team and Latvian Paralympic team athletes, team sports athletes of international and higher leagues, as well as sports trainings of the students of the Murjāni sports gymnasium and high-class athletes. The only exception when sporting events may take place in an epidemiologically semi-safe environment (yellow mode) will henceforth be limited to international sporting events, provided that they take place in a so-called "bubble format" that envisages that all persons involved in the organization and conducting of the competition are completely separated from overlapping with the persons not-involved in the organising and conducting of the competition (including planning hotel stays), regular testing of all persons (including those with a valid vaccination or recovery certificate) for Covid-19, and observing of other requirements anticipated in the Covid-19 infection spread prevention safety protocol; besides, the requirement to observe the "bubble format" is also applicable to Latvian athletes, as well as to any person from Latvia involved in the organization and conducting of the competition.

Recognition of professional qualifications of medical practitioners

In order to attract the necessary resources of medical personnel to Latvian hospitals, the Ministry of Health, the Health Inspectorate and hospitals have invited physicians to apply voluntarily. At present, representatives of the diaspora from countries that are not members of the European Economic Area or the Swiss Confederation have also applied voluntarily. In order to address the issue of recognition of professional qualifications of medical practitioners, the order stipulates that medical practitioners may renew their registration in the register and recertify if the person has performed medical treatment in the relevant profession, specialty or diagnostic method for at least 3 years during the last 5 years in one of the following countries: United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Israel, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Singapore.

On the use of masks in media broadcasts

The Order also stipulates that media broadcasts may only be produced in an epidemiologically safe environment. Participants may not wear masks if the program is attended by a maximum of 20 participants (excluding the media staff involved in the production of the program) and the studio is ventilated with mechanical ventilation or natural ventilation, ensuring that the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) does not exceed 1000 ppm, and continuous or regular air quality control is provided where possible. When broadcasting such a program, the media shall display information to viewers stating that all participants in the program have an interoperable vaccination or recovery certificate and that face masks are not used to provide clear and easy-to-understand information to viewers.

**Cabinet Order No. 720, adopted 9 October 2021, "Regarding Declaration of the Emergency Situation"*

<https://www.izm.gov.lv/en/article/epidemiological-safety-measures-15-november>