

Greece imposes lockdown on second largest city

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Greece announced a two-week lockdown Monday on its second largest city of Thessaloniki to try to contain a spike in coronavirus cases.

Flights to and from Thessaloniki airport will also be suspended under the measure, which comes into force early Tuesday and also affects the northern city of Serres.

"The health situation in Thessaloniki is serious. We must act to avoid overloading the health system," government spokesman Stelios Petsas said.

Everything will remain closed, except for schools, and those wanting to leave their homes will have to seek permission via [text message](#).

The latest restrictions followed localised lockdowns in the regions of Kozani and Kastoria, also in northern Greece, earlier this month.

"The government rang a lot of alarm bells early (about the virus), but some did not listen," said Health Minister Vassilis Kikilias, who visited Thessaloniki on Monday after 1,300 new cases were registered there at the weekend.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Saturday announced new curbs in Athens and other [major cities](#) from Tuesday.

"We must act now, before intensive care units buckle under the strain of lives in danger," Mitsotakis said in a televised address.

"The virus is attacking in waves, and we need to quickly adapt."

Greece has registered more than 37,000 [coronavirus](#) cases since February, including over 1,600 on Sunday, and a total of 635 deaths.

Mitsotakis said the new measures would shut down eateries, cafes, clubs, cinemas, museums and gyms in worst-hit areas, but would not affect [retail businesses](#) and schools, to soften the blow to the economy.

The rest of the country will have to abide by an overnight curfew while the use of masks is compulsory in indoor public spaces, Mitsotakis said.

But in contrast to a nationwide [lockdown](#) imposed in March, movement between regions is not restricted for now, he added, while hotels and hair salons will also be allowed to operate and schools will remain open.

"A total lockdown would hurt the economy and society," Mitsotakis said.

The government had already declared a nighttime curfew in Athens, Thessaloniki and other areas on October 22.

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