

Germany's health minister urges voluntary use of face masks

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Karl Lauterbach, Federal Minister of Health, shows an FFP2 mask during a press conference on the Corona situation in the summer at the Federal Press Conference in Berlin, Germany, Friday, June 17, 2022. Credit: Michael Kappeler/dpa via AP

Germany's health minister urged residents and visitors to wear face

masks indoors to protect themselves and others from the coronavirus, but he acknowledged that current data doesn't justify making mask use a legal requirement.

An indoor mask mandate largely lapsed across Germany this spring, with the requirement remaining for places such as hospitals and care homes. The libertarian Free Democratic Party, which is part of the country's governing coalition, has been particularly vocal in pressing for an end to COVID-19 measures.

German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach, an epidemiologist by training, said Germany was experiencing an expected increase in cases that amounted to a "summer wave." The country has recently reported between 50 and 130 coronavirus-related deaths a day, according to official figures.

"I ask those who want to protect themselves or others to wear masks indoors," Lauterbach, a member of the Social Democrats, told reporters in Berlin, noting that cases could continue rising over the coming months. "Voluntarily wearing masks needs to be a normality indoors."

The dominant variant circulating in Germany is comparatively mild, and many [residents](#) are vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19, meaning they are less at risk of serious illness, the [health minister](#) said.



Karl Lauterbach, Federal Minister of Health, arrives with an FFP2 mask to a press conference on the Corona situation in the summer at the Federal Press Conference in Berlin, Germany, Friday, June 17, 2022. Credit: Michael Kappeler/dpa via AP

"There is no need to to panic," he said.

Lauterbach said the government was working on obtaining a broad supply of vaccines for the fall that would respond to all the main variants.

Citizens who are at risk, or who want to avoid endangering others, should consider getting a second booster shot, he added.

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