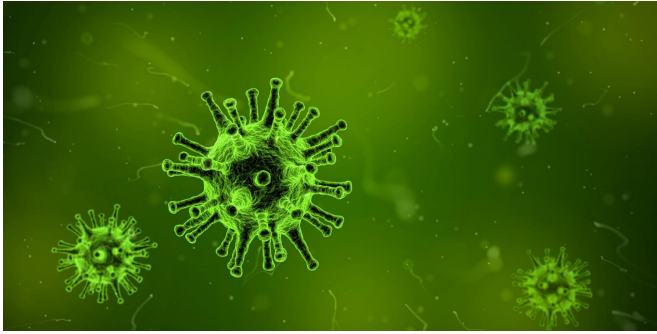


Most Dutch will get coronavirus, PM tells nation

16 March 2020



"In that scenario, we would actually have to shut down our country for a year or even longer, with all its consequences," he said, adding that the [virus](#) "could re-emerge immediately if the measures were withdrawn."

The Netherlands has confirmed 1,413 cases of COVID-19 disease including 24 deaths.

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Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte warned in a televised address to the nation Monday that most residents would get coronavirus, but he ruled out a full lockdown like other European countries.

Rutte says his government wants to build "group immunity" while waiting for a vaccine, by letting the least vulnerable people catch the virus while protecting the elderly and sick.

This could take "months, or even longer", he added, in the first such speech by a Dutch premier since the 1970s oil crisis.

The Netherlands has already imposed its toughest ever peacetime restrictions including the closure of schools, restaurants and even cannabis cafes.

"There's no easy message to you this evening... The reality is that a large part of the Dutch population will be infected by the coronavirus. That is what the [experts](#) are telling us," a grave-looking Rutte said.

But he added that, unlike Italy or Spain which have imposed draconian measures on movement to curb the virus, the Netherlands is not going to go "completely locked".

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