



Gibraltar cancels Christmas celebrations amid Covid spike

Description

GIBRALTAR: While the government has called upon the public to “exercise their own judgement”, they have “strongly” advised against any social events for at least the next four weeks, discouraging people from holding private Christmas events. Gibraltar has seen a steady increase in active cases of COVID-19 throughout October and November, which has gained pace over the past few days.

Health Minister, the Hon Samantha Sacramento, described the increase in case numbers as “drastic”, encouraging people to come forward to receive their booster vaccine.

The government has advised members of the public to wear masks, avoid large gatherings and maintain social distancing.

They also advised people to “conduct themselves in a cautious and sensible manner”, reminding the public that “we are still in a global pandemic and that people are losing their lives every day all over the world.”

Gibraltar has seen an average of 47 cases per day over the last seven days.

The country saw 124 new cases appear over the weekend, taking the number of active cases to 474.

Ms Sacramento said: “The drastic increase in the numbers of people testing positive for COVID-19 in recent days is a stark reminder that the virus is still very prevalent in our community and that it is the responsibility of us all to take every reasonable precaution to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

“The vaccination programme for 12 to 15-year-olds and the booster vaccination programme are now underway, and Gibraltar received 4680 more doses this week.

“Everyone who is eligible for a vaccine or a booster is strongly encouraged to take up the offer when they are called.”

In a statement released by the Gibraltar government, a spokesperson said: “Given the exponential rise in the number of cases, the Government, for example, intends to cancel a number of its own functions including official Christmas parties, official receptions and similar gatherings.

“The public, at this stage, are ultimately called upon to exercise their own judgement in this respect bearing in mind the current advice given.

“This consideration should include the number of persons, the setting whether indoor or outdoor, the degree of ventilation if indoor and whether those attending are vaccinated, elderly or vulnerable.

“In the same way, as has happened in the past, this advice may change going forward.

“The Government strongly advises against any large informal social events, parties or receptions being held over at least the next four weeks while the vaccine booster programme is rolled out.

It added: “The steady increase in active cases of COVID-19 that Gibraltar experienced throughout October has continued into November, and has become even more exponential in the last few days.

“This means that it is essential that the public conduct themselves in a cautious and sensible manner bearing in mind that we are still in a global pandemic and that people are losing their lives every day all over the world.

“The public is urged to avoid large gatherings, to wear a mask where prescribed by law or when they feel uncomfortable and to maintain a prudent social distance from other people.”

The government has traced the spike in cases back to religious gatherings, workplace mixing and social events.

Gibraltar currently mandates mask-wearing in all shops, medical establishments, airports, enclosed places of worship and on public transport.

Close contacts of an active case are also required to wear a mask when out in public, in the workplace, shopping or using public transport.

In March, Gibraltar became the first nation in the world to fully vaccinate its entire adult population against coronavirus.

Gibraltar – with a population of approximately 34,000 people – has had 6,509 coronavirus and 98 deaths since the start of the pandemic.

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