COVID-19 lockdown during Christmas and New Year

New measures and restrictions have been introduced in the run-up to Christmas and New Year based on the recommendations of the Task Force, including the health authorities.

16 December 2020
Introduction

In a recent risk assessment, the Task Force, including the health authorities, has raised the risk level for the entire country to 4 out of 5. Based on the recommendation of the Task Force, additional national measures have been introduced in the run-up to Christmas and New Year to reduce activities in society and the spread of COVID-19. Together with the existing measures, this amounts to a total lockdown of activities in Denmark.

COVID-19 infection rates are increasing in all regions of the country. This also applies to regions in which infection rates have so far remained lower for some time. Over the past week, infection rates and the rates of positive test results have increased sharply. The Task Force, including the health authorities, has raised the risk level for the Region of Northern Denmark and the Region of Southern Denmark to 4. Accordingly, the risk level for the entire country is at 4 out of 5.

Against that background, the Task Force, including the health authorities, recommends that additional national measures be introduced in the run-up to Christmas and New Year to reduce activities in society and the number of social contacts. The measures are taken to break the chains of infection and to keep the virus under control.

The Government has decided to follow the recommendations.

Before Christmas: In addition to all applicable national and stricter measures, a series of new measures and restrictions are introduced in the retail trade and for certain service providers who are in close physical contact with clients. This includes the decision that shopping centres, department stores, shopping arcades and bazaars as well as durable goods shops larger than 5,000 square metres must stay closed from 17 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021. Parcel post can still be picked up, and Christmas gifts etc. can still be purchased in shops not comprised by the restrictions.

After Christmas: Further lockdown measures will apply. As from 25 December 2020, all durable goods shops, including stores smaller than 5,000 square metres, must stay closed. However, grocery shops, such as supermarkets, as well as pharmacies and specialist shops selling medical equipment can stay open during the entire period.

These and several other measures are introduced due to concerns that retail shops will experience the usual congestion and will be bustling with people in the run-up to Christmas and in the period between Christmas and New Year, which could result in an increase in the number of infections.

A series of other national measures will continue to apply until the end of 28 February 2021, including the recommendation to reduce the number of social contacts, the ban on gatherings and the requirement and advice to use personal protective equipment. In addition, stricter measures will continue to apply until the end of 3 January 2021.

Altogether, the existing and the new measures amount to a COVID-19 lockdown of society during Christmas and New Year.

Read more about the national measures at www.coronasmitte.dk.
COVID-19 lockdown during Christmas and New Year
Overview of applicable national measures

General national measures
Ban on gatherings, requirement to use personal protective equipment etc.
Applicable until the end of 28 February 2021.

Stricter national measures
Restaurants etc. closed, students and pupils from the 5th grade sent home etc.
Applicable until the end of 3 January 2021.

New measures during Christmas and New Year
Shopping centres, hairdressers etc. closed. All retail shops except groceries, pharmacies etc. closed from 25 December 2020. Pupils in pre-school to the 4th grade sent home.

Small social bubbles during Christmas
- No gatherings of more than 10 people
- A maximum of 10 people in private homes recommended
  Including you and your household no matter the size of your home.
- A maximum of 10 social contacts recommended
  Keep within your own social bubble of no more than 10 different people aside from your household.
- The above also applies during the Christmas holidays.

Additional restrictions and recommendations also apply to the use of personal protective equipment, nightlife, restaurants etc., the retail trade, social activities, workplaces, public transport, migrant workers as well as the health sector, the elderly care sector etc. These measures will apply until the end of 28 February 2021.

Relief packages
The general wage relief packages from the spring will be reintroduced across the country. Companies facing a layoff of 30% of their staff or more than 50 employees can apply for compensation. Under the new relief packages, it will be possible to apply for compensation for individual business units or for the entire organisation. Further, the general relief packages for overheads and self-employed have been reintroduced for the entire country. Businesses and self-employed who experience a drop in revenue of at least 30% can apply for compensation under the relief packages. The relief packages will be in force as long as the restrictions apply. For further details, see www.virksomhedsguiden.dk.
General COVID-19 lockdown at Christmas and New Year

A series of general and stricter national measures apply across Denmark. Several new measures and restrictions have been introduced in the run-up to Christmas. Altogether, this amounts to a COVID-19 lockdown of society.

Current measures
A series of national measures will continue to apply until the end of 28 February 2021, including the recommendation to reduce the number of social contacts, the ban on gatherings and the requirement and advice to use personal protective equipment.

In addition, several stricter measures will continue to apply until the end of 3 January 2021. The measures include remote and online classes for pupils in the upper grades and students, a ban on on-site consumption of food and drinks at restaurants etc. and the requirement that indoor cultural and sports facilities must stay closed. Further, citizens are encouraged to work from home.

New measures for retail shops and liberal professions
Retail shops across the country usually experience congestion and are bustling with people in connection with Christmas and New Year – and congestion causes an increased risk of infections among the population.

Accordingly, shopping centres, department stores, shopping arcades and bazaars must stay closed from 17 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021. This means that except for grocery shops, pharmacies etc., shops located in such premises must normally stay closed unless there is direct access to the shop from the street. Durable good shops, such as DIY stores and interior design shops, larger than 5,000 squares metres must also stay closed from 17 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021. However, shops handing out parcels are allowed to do so if the goods have been pre-ordered and paid for online.

All retail shops are required to display signs encouraging people to do their shopping alone, and all shops are required to have dedicated staff who are clearly responsible for the handling of COVID-19, such as making sure that there is sufficient hand sanitizer etc.

Further, people in liberal professions who are not able to maintain the distance required to prevent infections, such as hairdressers, massage therapists, tattooists and driving schools, must keep their businesses closed from Monday, 21 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021.

As from 25 December 2020 until 3 January 2020, additional measures will be introduced for retail shops. All durable goods shops must stay closed during this period. The shops are still allowed to hand out goods that have been pre-ordered and paid for online, including fireworks.

Grocery shops, pharmacies and specialist shops selling medical equipment are exempt. So are supermarkets, petrol stations, baker’s shops etc. Restaurants, bars and cafés and similar establishments are also allowed to stay open for the pick-up of takeaway food and drinks.
Measures for shops, the retail trade and liberal professions

The measures apply until the end of 3 January 2021 across Denmark

Shopping centres, department stores, shopping arcades, bazaars and durable goods shops must stay closed

- Shopping centres, department stores, shopping arcades and bazaars must stay closed from 17 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021.
- This means that shops located in such premises must normally stay closed unless there is direct access to the shop from the street.
- Moreover, post offices, parcel shops, parcel pick-up points, including shops such as durable goods shops and kiosks, are allowed to hand out parcels that have been pre-ordered and paid for online.
- Durable goods shops larger than 5,000 square metres must also stay closed from 17 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021.
- All durable goods shops must stay closed from 25 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021.
- Retail shops are still allowed to hand out goods that have been pre-ordered and paid for online, including fireworks.
- The only exceptions are grocery shops, including supermarkets, baker’s shops and petrol stations, as well as pharmacies and specialist shops selling medical equipment.

Liberal professions must stay closed

- Certain liberal professions where the distance required to prevent infections cannot be maintained must stay closed from 21 December 2020 until 3 January 2021. This applies to tattooists, body piercers, spa clinics, body lounges, beauty parlours, massage parlours, tanning studios, hairdressers, driving schools and other premises in which clients are offered services involving close physical contact between the service provider and the client.

Signs encouraging customers to do their shopping alone are required

- Citizens are encouraged to plan their shopping to avoid having to visit many different shops.
- Signs strongly encouraging families etc. to let one person at the time do the Christmas shopping are required.
- Shops are required to appoint employees to be responsible for handling the COVID-19 measures.

Shopping streets

- The Government aims to reach agreement quickly with Local Government Denmark (Kommunernes Landsforening) to ensure that relevant municipalities have dedicated supervisory staff in shopping streets/pedestrian streets/market places in the period up to and after Christmas and for the January sales who actively approach consumers offering them hand sanitizer, encouraging them to keep their distance etc.

New measures concerning children and young people

Students at institutions of higher education and secondary school pupils have been sent home from school to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Remote classes will now be introduced for pupils in the lower grades who are not yet on Christmas holiday. Accordingly, pupils in pre-school to the 4th grade will be sent home, and after-school care facilities and clubs must stay closed from 21 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021. However, emergency childcare will be set up. Moreover, students at continuation schools, voluntary vocational courses and boarding units at independent and other private schools, students at boarding units at institutions of secondary and adult education and folk high schools as well as students on preparatory basic training programmes and students in classes with an autism spectrum disorder in upper secondary schools are sent home from school. Vulnerable children, young people and students at special schools, in remedial classes etc., at STU (special needs youth education), TAMU (adult vocational training) and adults receiving special needs teaching can still go to school. Students at boarding schools and folk high schools resident abroad and students who for some reason are unable to go home are exempt from being sent home from school.
Recommendations of the health authorities

In a recent risk assessment, the COVID-19 Task Force, including the health authorities, has raised the risk level for all of Denmark to 4 out of 5 due to a sharp increase in infection rates in all regions of the country and the risk of increasing infection rates.

The Task Force, including the health authorities, finds that the reproduction rate in Denmark is high and infection numbers are accelerating quickly. Infection rates have increased strongly across the country in the past few weeks, also in municipalities which have had low infection rates for some time. The accelerating infection rates are a cause for concern because Christmas and New Year are all about traditions and social gatherings with family and friends from all over the country. Combined with the cold weather and busy Christmas shopping, this involves a risk of further escalation of the spread of COVID-19 during Christmas and New Year as was the case after the autumn holidays when people mingled across geography and age groups.

On 15 December 2020, the incidence rate was 373 cases per 100,000 inhabitants compared to 240 cases per 100,000 inhabitants one week earlier, equivalent to a 55% increase. Likewise, the rate of positive test results has accelerated strongly since early December. In the week of 30 November 2020, the national rate of positive test results was 3.4% compared to 3.7% in the past week. At the same time, the number of hospitalised patients has increased.

The Task Force, including the health authorities, has raised the risk level for the Region of Northern Denmark and the Region of Southern Denmark to 4. Accordingly, the risk level for all regions and for all of Denmark is at 4 out of 5.

In light of the current situation, the Task Force, including the health authorities, has recommended that additional national measures and restrictions be taken to reduce activities in society in general and activities involving a risk of accelerating infection rates in particular, not least during Christmas and New Year.

The Government has decided to follow the recommendations.

In its recommendations, the Task Force particularly notes that:

- COVID-19 has spread to more regions of the country. In the period ahead, there is a significant risk of an acceleration in infection rates in several regions of the country.
- On 16 December 2020, the incidence rate was 390 cases per 100,000 inhabitants compared to 264 cases per 100,000 inhabitants one week earlier, representing a 48% increase.
- In the week of 30 November 2020, the national rate of positive test results was 2.7% compared to 4.1% last week.
- Over the past week, the number of hospitalised COVID-19 patients across the country has increased from 349 to 493 patients (on 16 December 2020). In light of the COVID-19 situation, it will be necessary in several regions to systematically postpone selected scheduled treatments of other patients now or in the weeks ahead.
National measures

A series of national measures apply until the end of 28 February 2021. In addition, several stricter measures will continue to apply in all 98 municipalities until the end of 3 January 2021

Stricter national measures
Applicable across the country until the end of 3 January 2021*

Primary, secondary and adult education*

- Primary school pupils are generally sent home and will have online classes.
- Pupils from pre-school up to the 4th grade as well as vulnerable children and young people are exempt.
- Students at institutions of secondary and adult education will have remote classes.
- Vulnerable students and educational programmes of great significance to society, including training courses for forklifts and similar certificates, are exempt.
- Students at continuation schools, voluntary vocational courses and boarding units at independent and other private schools as well as pupils and students at boarding units and special boarding units at institutions of secondary and adult education are exempt.
- Tests and exams are allowed.
- Folk high schools, voluntary vocational courses and continuation schools cannot launch new, short-term courses during Christmas.
- Day-care facilities, schools and educational institutions are recommended not to participate in Christmas services.

*There will be a smooth transition until 10 January 2021 for pupils and students who have been told to stay at home.

Institutions of higher education

- Classes at institutions of higher education are to be held online without physical attendance.
- There may be exceptions where physical attendance is required, such as classes at laboratories, clinics and workshops.
- Exams are exempt to the extent that it is not feasible to hold online exams.
- In case of physical attendance, everyone should have greater focus on not attending classes in case of symptoms and pay close attention to good hand hygiene, high cleaning standards, social distancing and wearing face masks.

Restaurants etc. and retail trade

- Establishments selling food and drinks (restaurants, cafés, bars etc.) can no longer sell food and drinks for on-site consumption.
- It is still allowed to sell takeaway food and drinks.
- Families etc. are encouraged to let one person at a time do the Christmas shopping.
- A number of measures are suggested to regulate behaviour in retail shops to reduce congestion and ensure compliance with the recommendations of the health authorities.

See also the measures outlined in the box above.

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Culture
- Cultural institutions must keep indoor facilities closed to the public.
- This restriction extends to theatres, concert halls, music venues, museums, art exhibitions, cultural centres, cinemas, libraries (except for borrowing and returning literature for research and educational purposes), evening schools, day folk high schools, university extension courses and schools of music and arts.

*The stricter measures came into force on 9 December 2020 in 38 municipalities and on 11 December 2020 in another 31 municipalities. The measures will apply to the remaining 29 municipalities from 16 December 2020 at 16.00 pm.

Other applicable national measures
Measures applicable until the end of 28 February 2021*

*Note that a series of stricter national measures apply until the end of 3 January 2021. The stricter measures (see above) are applicable during this period if they coincide with the measures mentioned below. For example, stricter measures apply to establishments selling food and drinks.

Gatherings
- Ban on 'small' gatherings of more than 10 people, but with some exceptions.
- No more than 50 people can gather at outdoor burial and funeral services.
- A maximum of 10 people in private homes is recommended.
- A social bubble of no more than 10 people is recommended.
- Ban on 'large' gatherings of more than 500 people.
- Super League matches suspended.
- The scheme allowing indoor and outdoor sports events etc. at facilities etc. with more than 500 people attending simultaneously is suspended.

Restaurants and nightlife
- Restaurants, bars, cafés and similar establishments must close at 10.00 pm (except for takeaway food and drinks).
- Nightclubs, discotheques etc. must stay closed.
- Music venues with a standing audience must stay closed.
- Signs must be displayed in establishments selling food and drinks stating the maximum number of persons allowed inside.

- Establishments must pay stronger attention to the recommendation of keeping a minimum distance of one metre between guests.
- Establishments are encouraged to introduce voluntary registration of guests to facilitate the tracking and tracing of COVID-19.
- Citizens are encouraged to download and actively use the Smittestop tracing app.
- The consumption of alcohol on moving coaches and buses banned.

Social events
- It is recommended to cancel events with overnight accommodation, such as holiday camps, school camps and study tours, unless the event is held at the organisers’ usual facilities and if the organisers assure that the event complies with the COVID-19 measures recommended by the health authorities.
- Weddings, confirmations and similar special occasion days already scheduled can be held if it is possible to observe the guidelines of the Danish Health Authority on private events, but all events ought to finish by 10.00 pm. No more than 10 people are allowed to participate in an event if it is held outside a private home or an adjacent garden even if the participants are mainly seated at assigned seats facing a stage or the like.
- It is recommended to cancel all civic festivals and similar events.

Other existing restrictions, recommendations etc.
- Stronger focus on the issuance of visiting restrictions and possibly visit bans at nursing homes and institutions for people with mental disorders or special needs to protect particularly vulnerable citizens.
- Requirements of premises open to the public in respect of floor area, access to water and soap or sanitizer, the display of information material etc.
- Premises and locations used for trade fair activities must stay closed.
- The police can issue dispersal orders and ban loitering.
- Restrictions on and guidelines agreed by the sector partnerships for day-care facilities, schools, educational institutions etc.
- Guidelines agreed by the sector partnerships for cultural, church and sports activities and for the business sector.
- Recommendations from the health authorities on how to prevent the spread of the disease, social events etc.

Face masks and shields
- Requirement to wear face masks or shields in the health and elderly care sectors and to some extent in the social care sector.

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• Requirement to wear face masks or shields in establishments selling food and drinks and retail shops, in cultural and religious buildings, at sports and association facilities, at job centres, at citizens service centres and at educational institutions, including institutions of secondary, adult and higher education.
• Teachers in primary schools and day-care facilities can wear shields.
• Requirement to wear face masks or shields on public transport etc. and for driving tests.
• More than two persons travelling together to work are encouraged to wear face masks. This also applies to commuting to and from work.

Retail stores
• Retail stores larger than 2,000 square metres are required to and small shops are encouraged to have visible supervisory staff.
• It is recommended that only one family member at a time does the shopping.
• It is not allowed to sell alcohol between 10.00 pm and 5.00 am at establishments selling food and drinks or in retail shops or other premises open to the public.
• Retail shops are required to display signs stating the maximum number of persons allowed at the premises.
• Stricter floor area requirement for durable goods shops, hypermarkets, shopping centres, department stores, shopping arcades, bazaars etc. larger than 2,000 square metres. This does not apply to grocery shops.
• It is required that a one-way system is clearly illustrated by way of clear markings, instructions or the like to make customers move in the same direction or keep to the right in durable goods shops, grocery shops, hypermarkets, shopping centres, department stores, shopping arcades, bazaars etc. larger than 2,000 square metres.

Workplaces and public transport
• Public and private employers are encouraged to make sure that employees work from home to the extent possible and appropriate given the nature of the job.
• Employees are encouraged to have greater focus on not going to work if they have symptoms.
• Public and private employers are encouraged to make sure that all social events at and in connection with workplaces are cancelled.
• Citizens are recommended to travel outside rush hours or, in the alternative, to walk or bike.
• Persons resident in high-risk countries who have a worthy purpose of entering Denmark, including employees, are required to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 72 hours before they cross the border.

New measures announced 16 December 2020

Primary, secondary and adult education
• Pupils in pre-school to the 4th grade are sent home from school as from 21 December 2020.
• Students in preparatory basic training programmes and students in classes with an autism spectrum disorder in upper secondary schools are sent home from school as from 21 December 2020.
• Students at continuation schools, voluntary vocational courses and boarding units at independent and other private schools as well as students at boarding units and special boarding units at institutions of secondary and adult education are sent home as from 21 December 2020.

Retail stores etc.
• Shopping centres, department stores, shopping arcades and bazaars must stay closed from 17 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021. This means that shops located in such premises must normally stay closed unless there is direct access to the shop from the street.
• Moreover, post offices, parcel shops, parcel pick-up points, including shops such as durable goods shops and kiosks, are allowed to hand out parcels that have been pre-ordered and paid for online.
• Durable goods shops larger than 5,000 square metres must also stay closed from 17 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021.
• All durable goods shops must stay closed from 25 December 2020 until the end of 3 January 2021. The shops are still allowed to hand out goods that have been pre-ordered and paid for online, including fireworks.
• The only exceptions are grocery shops, including supermarkets, baker’s shops and petrol stations, as well as pharmacies and specialist shops selling medical equipment.
• Certain liberal professions where the distance required to prevent infections cannot be maintained must stay closed from 21 December 2020 until 3 January 2021. This applies to tattooists, body piercers, spa clinics, body lounges, beauty parlours, massage parlours, tanning studios, hairdressers, driving schools and other premises in which clients are offered services involving close physical contact between the service provider and the client.
• Citizens are encouraged to plan their shopping to avoid having to visit many different shops.
• Signs strongly encouraging families etc. to let one person at the time do the Christmas shopping are required.
• Shops are required to appoint employees to be responsible for handling the COVID-19 measures.
• The Government aims to reach agreement quickly with Local Government Denmark (Kommunernes Landsforening) to ensure that relevant municipalities have dedicated supervisory staff in shopping streets/pedestrian streets/market places in the period up to and after Christmas and for the January sales who actively approach consumers offering them hand sanitizer, encouraging them to keep a distance etc.