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# FAQs - Quarantine for travellers

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## 1. Why was travel quarantine imposed in the summer?

In the summer of 2020 Switzerland repeatedly saw local increases in case numbers after people infected with the new coronavirus entered the country. When the numbers of cases within a particular country are low, it is important to prevent new imported infection of this sort. For this reason, on 6 July 2020 quarantine was introduced for people arriving in Switzerland from countries and areas with a high risk of infection.

## 2. From what incidence is there deemed to be a high risk of infection?

When the travel quarantine was introduced in Switzerland, the numbers of cases were relatively low. Under the Covid-19 Ordinance on International Passenger Transport Measures, there is deemed to be a high risk of (imported) infection starting at an incidence rate of 60.

Since the incidence rate in Switzerland is now above the European average, the threshold is being raised. With the amendment to the ordinance, now only countries and areas where the incidence is more than 60 higher than in Switzerland will be put on the quarantine list.

## 3. What does “incidence” mean, and what is it used for?

To be able to assess and compare the risk of infection in different countries, the number of new infections per 100,000 population in the last 14 days is taken. Whenever the term “14-day incidence”, or even more simply “incidence”, is used, it refers to this figure.

## 4. Does the change mean that the travel quarantine requirement has been eased?

This change does not constitute an easing of the measure, but corresponds to the actual purpose of the quarantine requirement, which is to reduce the risk of transmission. Travel quarantine fulfils its purpose if the risk of infection abroad is higher than in Switzerland. The new, dynamic threshold will ensure that this purpose continues to be fulfilled in the future, because the threshold varies in relation to the incidence rate in Switzerland.

## 5. What is the basis used to adjust incidence rates?

Given that the epidemiological situation is constantly changing, the quarantine list is adjusted regularly in line with current incidence rates. This is done on the basis of data from the ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control).

### Further information:

Federal Office of Public Health, Communication and Media Section, [www.baq.admin.ch](http://www.baq.admin.ch)  
This publication is also available in German, French and Italian.

## **6. What is happening to the list of countries and areas with a high risk of infection?**

Now that the threshold has been redefined, the list of countries and areas with a high risk of infection ("quarantine list" for short) is also being updated.

The new quarantine list enters into force on 29 October 2020. The mandatory quarantine requirement is governed by the list valid at the moment of entry into Switzerland.

## **7. Are there people who are exempt from the quarantine requirement?**

Various groups of people are exempt from the quarantine requirement. These exceptions are set down in Article 4 of the Covid-19 Ordinance on International Passenger Transport Measures.

## **8. What are the new exemption rules for people travelling on business?**

With effect 29 October 2020 the rules governing exemption for business travellers and those travelling for medical reasons are also being amended. Under the old rule, the stay outside Switzerland could not last longer than 5 days. This time limit has been lifted. The new overall rule is that the following are exempt from the quarantine requirement:

- People travelling on business for an important reason that cannot be postponed.
- People travelling for an important medical reason that cannot be postponed.

## **9. Why does the federal government not issue travel recommendations for individual countries?**

Given the new coronavirus situation all over the world, the federal government does not give travel recommendations for individual countries on its website. The reason for this decision is that there is a risk of infection with the new coronavirus in all regions of the world, and the epidemiological situation is changing constantly. It is therefore not possible to give country-specific recommendations that would be valid for any reasonable planning period. What is important is that people also follow the hygiene and distancing rules when travelling abroad and comply with any quarantine requirement.

## **10. Is quarantine compulsory for people arriving in Switzerland? Who checks that it is being complied with?**

The quarantine is compulsory for travellers arriving in Switzerland from a high-risk country or territory. It is not merely a recommendation.

Every person who is required to go into quarantine must report their arrival in Switzerland to the competent cantonal authority within two days and follow the instructions issued by this authority. The cantonal authorities are responsible for ensuring compliance with the quarantine measures. Federal support for the cantons in this regard is being reviewed.

## **11. Why do I need to contact the cantonal authorities at the beginning of quarantine?**

The cantonal authorities are responsible for ensuring compliance with the quarantine measures and providing people in quarantine with the information and support they need.

## **12. Are there sanctions for non-compliance with the quarantine rules?**

Failing to go into quarantine is a contravention of Article 83 of the Epidemics Act and carries a fine of up to CHF 10,000 (para. 1 let. h) if it is committed wilfully; if it is committed through negligence, the fine is up to CHF 5,000. The cantonal authorities are responsible for prosecuting these offences.

### **Further information:**

Federal Office of Public Health, Communication and Media Section, [www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch)  
This publication is also available in German, French and Italian.

### **13. Do children also have to go into quarantine?**

Yes, Children who arrive in Switzerland from a high-risk country or territory are also required to go into quarantine. Ideally, one parent should look after the child concerned. Parents looking after their quarantined children are also in quarantine.

### **14. Are quarantined persons entitled to compensation for loss of earnings?**

In the case of quarantine as set out under Article 2 of the COVID-19 Ordinance of 2 July 2020 on International Passenger Transport Measures, there is no entitlement to compensation.

It is possible, however, that in certain cases, an employer that sends an employee to a high-risk zone must pay them their salary. Continued salary payment may be based on Art. 324 or 324a CO. From a legal perspective, quarantine tends to be deemed prevention from work and as such, the employee must not be considered at fault as regards any potential compensation. This is decided on a case by case basis.

An employee who travels to a high-risk zone may be considered at fault if they are then quarantined. Compelling personal reasons may justify the trip (e.g. visiting a dying relative). If the work can be carried out from home and the employer provides all the necessary infrastructure to work remotely, the employee is not prevented from working.

Employees who travel to regions that were not high risk when they left are in principle not at fault. As the pandemic affects the whole world including Switzerland, other regions of the world are theoretically no more risky than various parts of Switzerland. Such cases should be dealt with by the courts where necessary. An employee who knowingly travels to a notoriously high-risk zone may be considered at fault.

### **15. During quarantine, are people allowed to go out occasionally for a walk, to get fresh air, or to buy groceries?**

No. The aim of the quarantine is to break chains of transmission. All physical contact with others should be avoided. This does not mean, however, that social contact is forbidden. Contact by phone or Skype is permitted.

### **16. What should I do if I develop symptoms while in quarantine?**

If you develop symptoms of the disease, it is important you notify the competent cantonal authorities immediately. They will decide on the approach to take, for example whether to carry out a test.

### **17. What should I do if I am required to go into quarantine and I have nowhere to go?**

It can be assumed that anyone entering Switzerland to stay has accommodation arranged. In principle, a hotel or holiday apartment is also considered suitable accommodation in which to quarantine.

### **18. What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?**

Isolation concerns people who are infected with the novel coronavirus and requires them to avoid all contact with others.

Quarantine concerns people who have been in close contact with a person infected with novel coronavirus and who as a result are believed to be sick or infected. After contacting the competent cantonal service, quarantined people should not have any contact with others. This prevents them from unwittingly infecting other people, and breaks transmission chains.

#### **Further information:**

Federal Office of Public Health, Communication and Media Section, [www.bag.admin.ch](http://www.bag.admin.ch)  
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