



FAQs - New coronavirus variant

Date:

21 December 2020

Entry ban

1) Who is concerned?

The Federal Council has decided to impose entry bans on all foreign nationals coming from the UK or South Africa. These entry restrictions apply to stays of less than 3 months without a permit. This applies in particular to travel to Switzerland for tourism purposes. The measure applies from 1pm on Monday, 21 December.

Holders of a Swiss residence permit are not affected by the entry ban. If they are able to travel to Switzerland, they may continue to do so.

Nationals from the UK and South Africa who are already in the Schengen area may continue to enter Switzerland. The measure is not aimed at persons on the basis of nationality, but on the basis of where they started their journey.

Please note that persons who are entitled and able to enter Switzerland must comply with the applicable quarantine regulations. Information on quarantine can be found on the website of the Federal Office of Public Health FOPH.

2) Does this mean that I (a Swiss resident) can no longer return to Switzerland from Great Britain or South Africa?

For people residing in Great Britain or South Africa who are currently staying in Switzerland, an arrangement for exemption from the flight ban for the journey home is being considered. The same applies to people living in Switzerland who are currently staying in the two respective countries. However, it is absolutely essential to ensure that the risk of infection during these return journeys remains minimal.

3) What do I have to do if I am currently staying in Great Britain or South Africa?

We ask all Swiss citizens who are currently staying in Great Britain or South Africa to register their journey and current whereabouts via the app "Travel Admin" → section "My travels". This enables the FDFA to send specific and useful information to registered people, if necessary. This is not possible if only a user profile is created. Personal contact with all travelers on an individual level is not possible. Travel Admin App: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/representations-and-travel-advice/travel-advice/travel-admin-app.html>

Further information:

Federal Office of Public Health, Communication and Media Section, www.baq.admin.ch
This publication is also available in German, French and Italian.

4) Can goods from the United Kingdom or South Africa continue to be imported into or transported through Switzerland (transit), and can goods be exported from Switzerland to the United Kingdom or South Africa?

Imports, exports and transit are not affected by the Federal Council's measures. People who transport goods professionally (drivers, pilots) may enter Switzerland without quarantining. When leaving Switzerland, the regulations of the destination or transit country must be observed.

Flight restrictions

5) Yesterday, the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA) suspended air traffic connections between Switzerland and the UK and South Africa. How did the FOCA proceed?

The FOCA was already in contact with various federal offices yesterday during the day. After the decision was made, foreign air safety authorities, airlines and the air navigation service providers were officially informed and a so-called NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) was issued. This makes pilots aware of these new restrictions.

6) Why did this happen so quickly?

The suspension of air traffic to and from Great Britain and South Africa was an immediate measure to minimize a possible spread of the new virus variant. As it was the case with the grounding of the Boeing 737 Max, we knew exactly what steps needed to be taken. Basically, it is always easier to restrict flight operations than to start them up again.

7) Until when do these flight restrictions apply?

For the time being, the restrictions will apply until 31.12.2020. Depending on the epidemiological situation, these restrictions may be temporarily extended or even extended to other countries by order of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH).

8) Instead of direct flights, can't airline passengers also reach Switzerland via detours, e.g. via Germany?

As of today, the Federal Council has decided on a fundamental entry ban for all foreigners who want to enter Switzerland from Great Britain and South Africa, even via detours via third countries. In this respect, we ask affected airline passengers to stay at home. The Swiss Confederation is currently examining possibilities of a repatriation for affected Swiss nationals, English and South Africans.

Quarantine

9) For whom and from when do the quarantine regulations enacted on 21 December 2020 apply?

All persons who have entered Switzerland from the United Kingdom or South Africa since 14 December 2020 must go into quarantine for 10 days. The quarantine applies from the time of entry.

10) Why do people arriving from these two countries need to go into quarantine?

Based on current information, the new coronavirus variant has mostly been detected in the United Kingdom and South Africa. People arriving from these two countries must therefore go into quarantine.

11) Why does the quarantine apply retroactively to 14 December?

People who have entered Switzerland since 14 December from these countries may still be infectious, or may still become infectious. This is why they must go into quarantine.

12) Do children also need to go into quarantine?

Yes. Children also need to go into quarantine. Their parents are responsible for looking after them.

Further information:

Federal Office of Public Health, Communication and Media Section, www.bag.admin.ch
This publication is also available in German, French and Italian.

13) What should people who have arrived from these countries and who have been placed in quarantine do now?

At the beginning of the quarantine, every person who is required to quarantine must report their entry into Switzerland to the competent cantonal authority within two days and follow the instructions issued by the relevant authority.

14) Whom can quarantined people contact for more information?

They can contact the competent cantonal authority.

15) Are there sanctions if people fail to comply with the mandatory quarantine?

If someone fails to comply with the mandatory quarantine, this is a contravention under Article 83 of the Epidemics Act that is punishable by a fine of up to CHF 10,000 (para. 1 let. h), or if due to negligence, with a fine of up to CHF 5,000. The cantons are responsible for criminal prosecution.

16) Can you leave your house to go for a walk, get some fresh air or run errands during the quarantine period?

No. The purpose of quarantine is to break chains of infection. Any physical contact with other people must be avoided. That doesn't mean, however, that social contact is forbidden. Contact by phone or Skype is permitted.

17) What should I do if I develop symptoms during the 10-day quarantine?

If you develop symptoms, it is important you inform the competent cantonal authority immediately. They will then decide what to do next, for example carry out a test.

18) The quarantine lasts 10 days. Where should people go whose stay should actually be over and who therefore no longer have accommodation?

It can be assumed that anyone who has entered Switzerland for a stay has accommodation arranged. In the case of visitors whose stay in accommodation has come to an end, visitors and accommodation providers must try to find a mutual solution if possible. Otherwise, the competent cantonal authority must provide accommodation so that the quarantine can be complied with.

19) Who is responsible for monitoring compliance with the quarantine?

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

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