

Decision under the Act relating to control of communicable diseases, section 4-1, second paragraph, on quarantine (isolation) after travelling outside the Nordic region

In order to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to help to maintain necessary health and care services, the Directorate of Health, in accordance with section 4-1, second paragraph, of the Act relating to control of communicable diseases, hereby decides

- 1) that everyone arriving in Norway after travelling outside the Nordic countries is to be required to undergo quarantine (isolation) for 14 days after arrival
- 2) that everyone arriving in Norway after travelling outside the Nordic countries is to be required to undergo quarantine (isolation) in case of symptoms such as cold, fever and/or shortness of breath. The isolation lasts for at least 7 days after symptom relief.

The restrictions also apply to travellers to Norway via Nordic countries, after a stay outside the Nordic countries.

Travellers who do not have symptoms may travel to their intended destination, but to the extent possible should maintain a safe distance from others while travelling.

Travellers with symptoms are to be isolated immediately and may not use public transport.

Drivers and personnel in goods and passenger transport operations are exempted from the decision. This also includes personnel who are necessary for carrying out the transport. Management is permitted to make exceptions for its own key personnel when strictly necessary to maintain the provision of critical public services at a satisfactory level.

The decision is effective from 27 February 2020 and will remain in effect until a new decision is taken.

Legal basis

Section 4-1, second paragraph, of the Act relating to control of communicable diseases authorises the Directorate of Health to implement various measures when necessary to prevent the occurrence of a communicable disease that is hazardous to public health or to impede its transmission within the population. Relevant measures appear in the first paragraph of the provision, letters a) to e).

Basic requirements when implementing measures pursuant to section 4-1 are set out in section 1-5 of the Act relating to control of communicable diseases, which states:

‘Infection control measures under the Act shall be based on clear medical grounds, be necessary for infection control reasons and appear suitable on the basis of an overall assessment. When implementing infection control measures, emphasis shall be placed on voluntary participation by the person or persons to whom the measure applies.

‘Coercive measures may not be used when, given the nature of the case and other circumstances, they would be a disproportionate intervention.’

Grounds for the decision

COVID-19 has been declared a serious outbreak of communicable disease that may have serious health implications for many people. The disease has also been declared a pandemic and public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization.

The extent of the COVID-19 epidemic in Norway varies by region. Since 10 March 2020, the Directorate of Health has noticed that the disease has entered a new phase in which it has not been possible to identify the chain of transmission for all who become ill. This means that all new instances of transmission can no longer be traced back to countries outside of Norway.

In the current situation it is necessary to prevent and impede the transmission of the SARS CoV-2 virus and COVID-19, and it is crucial to implement measures quickly for the entire country.

This measure is considered necessary both to protect vulnerable groups and to maintain the health service’s required capacity.

The measure appears proportionate and suitable on the basis of an overall assessment, and is applicable across the entire country.

The prohibition is applicable across the entire country unless something else of special character is decided.

The Directorate of Health’s considered view is that the infection control measure is based on medical grounds and is necessary for infection control reasons and to maintain adequate infection control capacity in municipalities and in the health and care services. The measure is therefore considered proportionate and suitable on the basis of an overall assessment.

In the opinion of the Directorate of Health, the social benefits of the infection control measure will exceed the burden and inconvenience of those to whom the measure applies. Voluntary participation has been emphasised in the assessment.

In conclusion we call attention to section 4-1, third paragraph, of the Act relating to control of communicable diseases, which states that the municipal council may also ensure implementation of the measures if the attitude or behaviour of the responsible party could lead to a delay in implementation, or if the identity of the responsible party is uncertain.

Sincerely,

Olav Valen Slåttebrekk, by authority
Deputy Director General

Anne Louise Valle
Head of Department

Copy:
Directorate for Civil Protection; Ministry of Health and Care Services