

**Statement by the Minister of Health, Mr Michalis Hadjipantela, on the decisions
of the Council of Ministers on measures to contain the pandemic**

From the very first moment the pandemic “knocked on our door”, the Government stood by the citizens, made difficult and severe decisions, always aiming at the protection of public health and the prevention of the spread of the virus.

There is an outbreak of the virus an increase in daily cases, hospitalizations and deaths in all countries, which is also noticed in our country.

According to official EU data, the higher a country’s vaccination rate is, the lower the mortality rate. Cyprus holds the 4th lowest place concerning death rates among EU countries. This was achieved because we had taken timely measures in the past, preventing the overcrowding of state hospitals, while we did not allow ourselves to reach the point of deciding who will live and who will die.

It is only with cooperation and individual responsibility that we will be able to overcome the threat of the virus and only then will we be able to safeguard this Christmas, without taking additional measures.

As Ministry of Health, we stress, once again, that vaccination is our only weapon to return to normality. We are certain that our fellow citizens will respond. This can be inferred from the large number of citizens visiting vaccination centres over the last few days. So far, 84690 individuals have received the 3rd dose of the vaccine and none of them had to be hospitalized. Therefore, the booster dose of the vaccine is now considered critical.

We hope that the new treatment of antiviral medicines, expected in Cyprus by the end of December, will give us the chance to see light at the end of the tunnel, and along with the vaccines, will significantly help us tackle the pandemic.

Therefore, in order to contain the outbreak of the virus, the Council of Ministers decided that:

- As of 29 November, the age limit for wearing masks is reduced to 6 years of age, in all areas where the protective mask is required.

- As of 29 November, all individuals aged 6-11 must carry a SafePass. The SafePass conditions applicable to this group are: a) the COVID-19 recovery certificate during the last six (6) months, or (b) a certificate of a negative result from a PCR or rapid antigen test valid for seven (7) days (In print form or in the form of a text message).
- As of 29 November, all primary school pupils will undergo rapid antigen tests on a weekly basis, through of the Ministry of Health mobile testing units, until the break of the school year for Christmas holidays.
- As of 29 November, all school Christmas celebrations are suspended. For other Christmas events organized by various other bodies, a permit by the Ministry of Health should be issued.
- As of 29 November, the SafePass possession checks, through the CovScan Cyprus app, will be applied to people aged 14 years and over.
- As of 29 November in high-risk areas where case chains will be detected, rapid tests will be carried out through the mobile units of the Ministry of Health to all individuals regardless of age and vaccination history.
- As of 1 December, all individuals aged 18 years or older who have not completed their vaccination scheme must undergo a PCR test valid for 72 hours or a Rapid antigen test with a validity of 48 hours for SafePass purposes.
- As of 13 December, all citizens will be given the opportunity to conduct a self-test. The cost of self-tests will be borne by citizens in cases of non-vaccinated individuals, while in the case of vaccinated individuals, they will be subsidized by the Ministry of Health and prescribed by Personal Doctors. It is clarified that self-tests do not substitute Rapid or PCR tests for SafePass purposes and in case of a positive indication, the result will be confirmed through a PCR test.
- As of 18 December, the SafePass will no longer be valid for individuals who will not have received a booster dose of the vaccine after a period of seven (7) months following the completion of their initial vaccination scheme.
- As of 15 December, only persons aged 12 years and older who have received at least one dose of the vaccine will be able to enter the following premises:
 - (I) closed and outdoor stadiums
 - (II) theatres, amphitheatres, cinemas, entertainment halls
 - (III) nightclubs, discos, music/dance and catering establishments.
- The extension of all other provisions of the Decree, in force until 31 December

2021.

All the above measures will be regulated via a decree issued in the following days.

24.11.2021