

Announcement by the Ministry of Health regarding the decisions of the Council of Ministers

At today's meeting of the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Health, Mr Michalis Hadjipantela, presented the recommendations of the members of the Scientific Advisory Committee that were discussed at yesterday's meeting, during which the data recorded by the Tracing Team, by the hospitals of the State Health Services Organization and the rates of vaccination coverage of the population were analyzed and evaluated. In recent days a steady course of epidemiological indicators has been recorded, with the number of daily positive cases decreasing. Complacency is not allowed and constant vigilance is needed by everyone to ensure that the health protocols are faithfully complied with.

According to data from the Epidemiological Surveillance Unit of the Ministry of Health, 13,997 positive cases within the community were recorded from 15 to 21 January 2022, with a decrease recorded in all age groups. The Ministry of Health is constantly on alert, carrying out an evaluation of all scientific and/or epidemiological data together with the Scientific Advisory Committee. The guiding principle is the safer functioning of society, with the aim of protecting and defending the health of all citizens.

Taking into account the above as well as the fact that specific protocols need to be updated and measures need to be taken to enable society and the economy to remain operational, **the Council of Ministers has decided:**

(α) as of 28 January 2022, the replacement of the PCR laboratory test with rapid antigen tests (rapid test) on the 7th day as referred to in the protocol for management of close contacts of confirmed positive cases and on this basis should self-isolate for 10 days.

- Therefore, the discharge of close contacts earlier than 10 days is also possible after a rapid antigen test with a negative result on the 7th day from contact or later, at their own expense.

- The decision to replace the PCR with a Rapid test on day 7 excludes healthcare professionals working in private and state hospitals, Senior People's homes and closed facilities.
- Regarding the implementation of the test-to-stay measure in schools, students who are close contacts, instead of a PCR test will be able to undergo a rapid antigen test for discharge purposes on the 7th day. (Therefore, students who have made use of this measure as of Monday 24 January 2022 should undergo a rapid antigen test for a period of 7 days at the rapid antigen testing units operating in schools announced daily by the Ministry of Health).

(b) the implementation of the test-to-stay measure for health professionals in public and private hospitals, the Police and the Fire Service.

- The date of implementation of the measure will be announced after consultation with the relevant Ministries and Services.

(c) as of 28 January 2022, for children aged 2-5 years, rapid antigen testing (rapid test) once a week is recommended for attendance in kindergartens and pre-primary schools.

- The rapid antigen test will be offered free of charge through the rapid antigen testing units of the Ministry of Health.

(d) the extension of all existing measures until 17 February 2022.

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