



MAPHM
MALTA ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEDICINE

3rd March 2021

MAPHM calls for an immediate increase in restrictive measures to curb the current high rate of new COVID-19 infections. Over the past week we have seen the highest number of new infections yet. Hospital is full to the brim, and we only have a handful of ITU beds left available.

Other countries have gone into lockdown for a far lower rate of infections than we are in right now. We are not advocating for a full lockdown, but there is a need to introduce stricter measures to stop the current very high level of spread. None of us want to restrict activities so much that it hurts our families and businesses, but unfortunately this is the situation we are now in. Unless we make sacrifices now, we will end up suffering even more. This has been the philosophy and reasoning since day 1 of the pandemic, and whilst this was handled admirably 12 months ago, there is hesitancy to do what is necessary to prevent further spread now, where the risk is even greater due to the new virus variants and higher rate of spread. This pandemic has taken a great toll on many people, both directly and indirectly. However, we need to keep on fighting it according to scientific evidence unless we want all the effort and sacrifices of the past year would have been in vain.

The main principle of new measures that should be introduced is to reduce the mingling of people from different households. All non-essential activities such as extra-curricular activities, and recreational activities should be restricted for some time. We must improve enforcement through adequate human resourcing and an increase in penalties for defaulters. Regarding workplaces, we have had a full year to prepare our workforce to work remotely. Government should lead by example here and order all non-essential personnel to work from home.

Unless we restrict our activities now, we will end up in an even worse situation in a few weeks' time, requiring even stricter measures. Once the infection rates decrease, and once a significant proportion of the population has been vaccinated, we can then restart activities gradually. The cost of not doing this would be measured in lives lost.

In the meantime, we continue to stress the importance of individual responsibility. Avoid gatherings, always keep a distance of 2 meters from others, wear a mask properly and wash your hands with soap or alcohol rub regularly especially when outside the house. As always stay at home if you feel unwell and call the Helpline 111 for advice. This too shall pass but we need to all do our part both as individuals and as policy makers.

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On behalf of the MAPHM Executive Committee:

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