

Dutch see new coronavirus infections fall, credit lockdown

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An employee of the Municipal Health Service GGD, right, administers a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to a health care worker at a coronavirus vaccination facility in Houten, central Netherlands, Friday, Jan. 8, 2021. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)

The number of new coronavirus infections in the Netherlands has fallen for the second week in a row, its public health institute said Tuesday, calling the decrease "the first effect" of a nationwide lockdown that began in mid-December.

The announcement came hours before Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte was expected to extend the lockdown in an attempt to further slow the spread of the virus and rein in the new, more transmissible variant first detected in the U.K.

Confirmed new COVID-19 infections over the last week fell 12% to 49,398, the institute said, while [hospital admissions](#) for people with the coronavirus fell 18% and new COVID-19 patients in intensive care units declined by 12%.

The overall Dutch death toll from COVID-19 now stands at more than 12,500.

On Wednesday, a mass testing program is starting in a municipality just outside Rotterdam, the country's second-most populous city, after a cluster of COVID-19 infections linked to an [elementary school](#) included at least 30 cases of the new variant.



An employee of the Municipal Health Service GGD administers a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to a health care worker at a coronavirus vaccination facility in Houten, central Netherlands, Friday, Jan. 8, 2021. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)



An employee of the Municipal Health Service GGD administers a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to a health care worker at a coronavirus vaccination facility in Houten, central Netherlands, Friday, Jan. 8, 2021. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)



An employee of the Municipal Health Service GGD prepares a Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to be administered to a health care worker at a coronavirus vaccination facility in Houten, central Netherlands, Friday, Jan. 8, 2021. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong)

The Netherlands last week became the last European Union country to begin vaccinations against COVID-19, with frontline hospital staff and carers for vulnerable members of society the first to receive shots.

Under the current Dutch lockdown, all schools and nonessential shops are closed, along with public venues such as cinemas, museums and libraries. There also are strict limits on the size of gatherings both indoors and outside.

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