

Covid-19 cases in S'pore likely to peak in a week or less: Experts

Republic should be able to get through latest wave without tightening curbs, says Wong

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As Singapore approaches the peak of its Covid-19 infection wave, it is still holding out.

The country should reach its infection peak in a week or even sooner, experts here said.

Singapore should also be able to tide through the current wave without tightening restrictions, Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said yesterday.

Hospitals are still holding up as cases start to peak, he added, speaking to the media at Masjid Ar-Raudhah in Bukit Batok as Muslims celebrate Hari Raya Haji.

The recent surge in infections has been mainly driven by the newer Omicron sub-variants known as BA.4 and BA.5.

Based on data from the Ministry of Health's website, the Republic's week-on-week infection ratio – which refers to the ratio of community cases for the past week, over the week before – is falling. This means that Covid-19 cases are increasing at a slower rate.

"It does not mean that the epidemic is declining, but it does mean that the peak is approaching," said Associate Professor Alex Cook, vice-dean of research at the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

The week-on-week infection ratio continues to be slightly above one. This means the number of new weekly cases is increasing.

"When the ratio hits one, that signifies the peak is upon us, and thereafter the ratio should go below one

and the cases should start to fall. The case numbers fluctuate lots from day to day, but the weekly growth rate has a quite strong pattern," Prof Cook said.

"However, it's worth noting that the case numbers are a fraction of the actual infections that are happening right now, and if testing and diagnosis rates have changed over the last few weeks, this analysis would be less accurate," he added.

This is the first time Singapore is riding through a Covid-19 wave without any heightened safe management measures. Riding such a surge in cases without stepped-up measures is the definition of resilience, said Professor Dale Fisher, a senior infectious diseases consultant at the National University Hospital.

He added: "We need to do it with flu and we will need to keep doing it for Covid-19 for the foreseeable future. The heightened measures have a financial and social cost and shouldn't be implemented without good reason. Nonetheless, we have these measures as a backup in case the situation does become dire."

Singapore had previously implemented restrictions such as limits on group sizes for social gatherings and outdoor mask wearing.

DPM Wong said: "But I think we will be able to ride through (this particular wave) without having to impose any new restrictions for now. That's our assessment."

"It's another reminder to all of us that the pandemic is not over. We all have to continue to take precautions and keep safe."

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