

**Announcement by the Minister of Health, Mr Michalis Hadjipantela, on
the decisions of the Council of Ministers**

The rapid deterioration of epidemiological indicators recorded in Cyprus during the last weeks due to the prevalence of the Omicron variant, leaves no room for complacency. As Ministry of Health, we are constantly alert and we evaluate all scientific and/or epidemiological data together with the Scientific Advisory Committee. Our main concern is for society to operate safely with the aim to protect and defend the health of all our citizens and in particular of the vulnerable groups.

With a positivity rate of more than 3% and with more than 28,000 cases since the last meeting of the Council of Ministers, the State Health Services Organization hospitals have been working non-stop to respond to the increased number of hospitalizations. We take this matter seriously into account, since the protection of public health is a key factor in every decision we are taking.

Following scientists' recommendations, further protective measures in schools are considered necessary at this stage in order to keep schools in operation and detect positive coronavirus cases in time, without depriving students of the basic right to education.

The Council of Ministers has therefore decided at today's session:

- (a) **As of 17 January to 16 February 2022**, the inclusion of the measure "test to stay" in primary and secondary education, aiming to keep schools in operation and identify positive coronavirus cases in time. Close contacts of confirmed positive cases with no vaccination history, instead of staying in self-isolation, will undergo Rapid antigen tests every day for a period of 5 days. This decision concerns only students.
- (b) **As of 13 January 2022**, the lifting of the ban on visits to Senior People's homes and closed facilities, where access to such premises is **only** allowed to persons who have completed their vaccination scheme and the period of 7 months has not elapsed, or who hold a certificate of recovery and the 90-day period has not elapsed, or have received the booster third dose, provided that they present a negative Rapid test result of the same day.
- (c) **As of January 14 at 5:00 a.m.**, for travel purposes to the Republic of Cyprus, a 72-hour PCR laboratory test or a 24-hour Rapid antigen test is accepted. In addition, in the case of positive cases, at least 10 days must have elapsed from the date of sampling of a positive result in order to travel to the Republic of Cyprus. **It should be recalled that by 31 January 2022**, all passengers over the age of 12 must carry out a PCR laboratory test upon arrival at the airports of the Republic of Cyprus and 72 hours after arrival, a Rapid antigen test. Passengers who have received the booster/3rd dose of a vaccine are an exception.
- (d) The extension of all existing measures until 31 January 2022.

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