

COVID-19: UPDATE ON GUIDANCE

11 January 2021

Welcome back to work, everybody, for the start of the New Year. To help us all stay safe amid the continuing pandemic, here is a memo containing the current guidance. Because both Sweden's official guidance and our own SIPRI guidelines have unfolded cumulatively, most of the information below should be familiar to you. But please read it carefully to ensure you are properly informed.

As you all probably know, the data on the Covid-19 pandemic in Sweden over the Christmas and New Year period were not good. The more infectious variant has arrived and the guidelines are tighter than at any previous point here in the period of the pandemic.

For SIPRI staff not currently in Sweden, PLEASE make sure you are familiar with and abide by the regulations, guidance and norms that prevail in your locality. If you are planning to come to Sweden, make sure you are aware of Swedish restrictions on visitors from both within and outside the EU.

For SIPRI staff in Sweden, there is no change in our guidelines on access to SIPRI premises. In general, we foresee no change for several months. We are planning on the assumption that we will continue with working from home and that travel will be very restricted.

Please note, therefore:

- Everyone who can work from home should do so.
- Rare visits to the office when absolutely necessary are permitted. Maintain social distance from others at all times.
- When travelling to the office, avoid public transport if possible.
- Meetings – even one-to-ones – should be held online.

Travel:

- The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs advisory against non-essential travel to countries outside the EU is valid until 31 January 2021. It may be renewed thereafter.
- The Public Health Agency of Sweden urges all recent travelers from Great Britain or South Africa to Sweden to stay at home for at least seven days, to minimise contact with others, and to be tested straightaway after arrival (with follow-up tests five days after arrival). The rest of the household should also stay at home awaiting test results.
- If travelling within Sweden, do so in a way that minimizes the risk of infection:
 - The Swedish Public Health Agency's guidance is that protective masks should be used in public transport during weekday rush hours. These peak travel times are at 07.00-09.00 and 16.00-18.00. Even better than wearing a mask, simply don't travel during those periods.
 - Whenever possible, avoid public transport: walk, cycle or drive if you can.

Additional matters of personal responsibility that apply to everybody:

- As you already know, you are obliged to take measures to protect yourself and others.
- Take care to avoid getting infected and infecting others: wash your hands, stay at home when ill, keep a safe distance from other people, book a test if you think you might have COVID-19.
- Self-isolate if you live with someone who has a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- If possible, shop alone, avoid crowds, and don't stay in shops longer than necessary.
- If you engage in sport and leisure activities, minimise infection risk as you do so.
- Stay up to date on what advice and recommendations apply where you are.

Social insurance (sick pay):

The Government has extended the temporary measures in social insurance

- You can get compensation for the first day you are sick (normally you can't) until 28 February. Parallel compensation for employers has been extended for the same period.
- From 1 January 2021, the compensation is increased to 810 SEK before tax.
- You need a medical certificate from the 15th day of the period of illness (normally you need it on the 8th day); this has been extended to 30 April.

These periods may, of course, be further extended in due course.

Loneliness:

At the moment, it is essential to avoid meeting many people and avoid social settings where many people are gathered. This can lead to loneliness because both close relationships and encounters in everyday life are important for feeling good. If you know someone you think might feel lonely, a call, a letter or a message can make a big difference.

Loneliness can create feelings of both stress and anxiety. If you react badly over a period of time, seek professional help. Do not wait too long. Contact 1177 Vårdguiden by calling 1177 (24 hours). You can also find out more about getting help at www.1177.se/stockholm.

The vaccine

At the beginning of 2021, Stockholm Region is starting to offer the Covid-19 vaccine. There are three stages, with those most in need offered vaccination first:

1. The first group includes older people in residential care and people with home care, primarily those aged 70 and older, people caring for them, and staff working with particularly vulnerable people within health and social care services.
2. The second group to be offered the vaccine includes all residents in risk groups, healthcare and nursing staff and residents aged 70 and older.
3. The third group is all residents aged 18 and older.

More information:

General:

- <https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/the-public-health-agency-of-sweden/communicable-disease-control/covid-19/>
- <https://www.krisinformation.se/en>

On the situation in Stockholm:

- <https://www.sll.se/>

On the vaccine:

- https://www.1177.se/globalassets/1177/regional/stockholm/media/y.-dokument-0-pdfer/corona-sprak/vaccination/rs_1177_infoblad_vaccination_covid_a4_engelska.pdf