

1. HEALTH MINISTRY URGES USE OF TRACER APP

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Health Ministry urges use of tracer app

Cyprus has called on the public to use an online application dubbed as CovTracer-EN, in a bid to put a lid on the spread of coronavirus.

CovTracer-EN, the country's national application for mobile phones introduced by the Deputy Ministry of Innovation, aims to complement the work of Cyprus' Covid contact tracing unit.

The app is designed to notify the user in case they come in contact with a confirmed coronavirus case but also assess, by an algorithm, on "possible close contacts".

"With the gradual relaxation of restrictive measures and the reopening of areas for people gathering, the voluntary utilisation of the app contributes to greater citizen safety," the health Ministry said.

Launched on March 11, the application, is available for download both in Google Play and the Apple App Store.

The move comes as the government is set to review epidemiological data and decide on the next phase of easing the lockdown from April, with more relaxations expected.

Health Ministry officials say the app is a useful tool which can notify users if they are exposed to the virus, especially in areas such as restaurants, shopping malls, and universities.

Moreover, the ministry said the application is also considered useful, as European states are expected to start allowing people to travel soon.

Some 20 EU member states have introduced similar applications, currently used by 82 million European citizens.

The applications employ Bluetooth technology, monitoring signals from the apps installed by other users.

It will detect all apps of citizens that have been in proximity for more than 15 minutes and less than 2 metres apart and keep track of these contacts for 14 days, without



recording the details of these individuals.

If a user is tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, then they have the option to inform their application by entering a code in the app to send this information to other users that they came in contact with. At the same time, the user receives notification with instructions on what to do next.

Officials say the privacy of the user will be fully protected

as no personal data is exchanged or revealed, nor names, locations, profiles.

The CovTracer-En was developed by the Cyprus Centre of Excellence (CYENS), in collaboration with the KIOS Centre of Excellence at the University of Cyprus.

Cyprus has so far reported 44,631 COVID-19 infections and 252 deaths since March last year.