



AS IT IS

South Korea Bars Fast Exercise Music

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Many people who exercise need good music to get themselves through their workout. But in South Korea, their choice of music had been reduced under new COVID-19 rules.

The country has increased social distancing and travel restrictions to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Now, South Korea has added a requirement that **gyms** must not play music that is too fast. The government set a limit of 120 beats per minute. Gyms will not be able to play faster music during group exercises.

Health officials say the measure is meant to prevent breathing too quickly or getting **sweat** on other people. They wanted to avoid having to close businesses completely, as they have done earlier during the coronavirus health crisis.

Opposition lawmakers, who called it “nonsense,” have made fun of the rule. Gym owners see the rules as ineffective or unrealistic.

Kang Hyun-ku is an owner of a gym in northern Seoul. He listens to fast **K-pop songs** each morning.

Kang told Reuters that playing happy songs “is to cheer up our members and the overall **mood.**” He added that his biggest question is if playing slower music has been proven to have any effect on the spread of the virus.

He questioned how it will be possible to control the music people listen to when they wear personal listening devices like earphones.

The Korean government enacted its highest level of social distancing rules in Seoul and neighboring areas on Monday. The country is currently battling its most severe COVID-19 outbreak.

The new rules also limit running on gym equipment to no faster than six kilometers an hour. They ban the use of **showers** at gyms. And they restrict the popular sport, table tennis, to two people on a table, among other measures.

Kim Young-tae is a member of the main opposition People Power Party. He added, "So you don't get COVID-19 if you walk slower than 6 (kilometers) per hour?" Kim added, "And who on earth **checks** the bpm of the songs when you work out? I don't understand what COVID-19 has to do with my choice of music."

A health official said the government came up with the new rules after considering many different options.

President Moon Jae-in on Monday said he was saddened when thinking of small and middle-sized business owners and others who feel the weight of the rules.

"I can't help but feel very sorry to once again ask the citizens for a bit more **patience**," he said at a special COVID-19 policy meeting.

Whang Myung-sug is a 62-year-old member of Kang's gym. She said the government is unfair in the way it is restricting gyms.

She said these rules are just the usual way the government makes plans complex. She said the government officials made the rules as if they "had never worked out at a gym."

I'm Gregory Stachel.

Daewoung Kim and Dogyun Kim reported this story for Reuters. Gregory Stachel adapted it for VOA Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

gym – *n.* a room or building that has equipment for sports activities or exercise

sweat – *n.* clear liquid that is produced by skin when the body is hot or nervous

K-pop – *adj.* of or relating to popular Korean music

song – *n.* a short piece of music with words that are sung

mood – *n.* an attitude or feeling shared by many people

shower – *n.* a device that produces a spray of water for you to stand under and wash your body

patience – *n.* the quality of being patient: the ability to remain calm and not become annoyed when dealing with problems or with difficult people
