

Virus-hit Austria sees return to 'normal' by mid-2021

August 28 2020



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Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz on Friday predicted a return to "normal" next year after a challenging autumn and winter because of the pandemic.

The next months would be "challenging" as schools start again, temperatures drop and the annual flu season begins, he said.

However, Kurz added: "It is very probable from our standpoint today that next summer can be a normal one again."

He said the government would decide next week whether to further tighten measures to rein in rising numbers of infections.

He did not say what these measures could be but that the government's goal was to try to avoid another strict lockdown after the one in March to curb the pandemic.

Last month, Austria re-introduced mandatory face mask use in supermarkets, food stores, post offices and bank branches—in addition to [public transport](#) and pharmacies.

The Alpine EU member, with a population of nearly nine million, has largely escaped the brunt of the crisis so far, recording some 26,400 novel [coronavirus](#) cases and 733 deaths.

But cases have risen with more than 300 new daily infections recently marking a record high since the gradual lifting of the strict lockdown in April.

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Citation: Virus-hit Austria sees return to 'normal' by mid-2021 (2020, August 28) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-08-virus-hit-austria-mid-.html>

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