

Austria toughens restrictions amid spike in virus cases

September 11 2020



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Austria will expand mandatory mask-wearing and slap new restrictions on events as it battles a surge in new coronavirus cases, the government

said Friday.

Masks will be compulsory in all shops and [public buildings](#) from Monday, in addition to places where they must already be worn such as supermarkets and [public transport](#), Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said.

Austria is witnessing its highest infection rates since the country was in lockdown in the spring, with 654 new cases recorded on Wednesday.

"It is getting serious again. The numbers have kept rising in recent weeks," Kurz told a press conference.

Spectator numbers for events with fixed seating will also be reduced to 1,500 people for indoor events and 3,000 people for outdoor events.

Events without allocated seating will be restricted to a maximum number of 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors from Monday.

Food and drinks indoors will also only be served at tables to avoid mingling at parties and in bar areas, while masks will have to be worn by waiters and waitresses, Kurz added.

He warned the government could introduce further measures if cases kept rising but would try to avoid a repeat of the lockdown imposed earlier this year, which entailed severe restrictions on movement and the closure of shops and restaurants.

The EU member with its nearly nine million people has so far recorded 31,897 infections and 750 deaths.

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Citation: Austria toughens restrictions amid spike in virus cases (2020, September 11) retrieved

29 June 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-09-austria-toughens-restrictions-spike-virus.html>

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