

# Austria orders seven million coronavirus antigen tests

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The Austrian government said Friday it had ordered seven million antigen tests as part of a mass coronavirus testing drive, with teachers and police officers first in line to receive them.

Around 200,000 teachers and kindergarten workers will be tested over the weekend of December 5 and 6, as Austria's second coronavirus

[lockdown](#) is due to end, according to an Austrian [government](#) press statement.

On December 7 and 8, around 400,000 [police officers](#) are to be tested.

Also in the first week of December, residents in districts with high coronavirus case figures will be tested, although these have yet to be selected.

Two waves of testing for the [general population](#) are then planned for the week before Christmas and at the start of the New Year.

The programme will be carried out using seven million antigen tests ordered from Siemens and Roche, with the government saying more orders are planned as the testing drive continues.

The Austrian government said tests it had ordered were considered the "most reliable available on the market" by [health authorities](#).

Last Saturday Chancellor Sebastian Kurz announced that Austria was toughening its anti-[coronavirus](#) restrictions, shutting schools and shops until December 6 to get spiralling numbers of infections under control.

The next day he announced that a mass testing programme would be part of the country's path out of lockdown and help ensure safe Christmas celebrations.

Participation in the testing programme is voluntary.

"A few minutes for a [test](#) could prevent weeks of lockdown for the whole country," Kurz said in a statement Friday.

"That's why we are asking the whole population to support this

nationwide project and take part," he added.

Several thousand soldiers will be involved in the programme's logistics, having already helped in the mass testing programme in neighbouring Slovakia several weeks ago.

While Austria escaped the worst of the first wave of the pandemic with an early lockdown, case numbers and deaths have soared over the autumn, prompting criticism of the government for not acting sooner.

On Friday the total number of confirmed infections stood at 234,778, of whom 2,224 had died.

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