Germany to end free COVID tests to boost jab take-up

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Germany will end free coronavirus tests in October, regional leaders and the federal government agreed on Tuesday, in a push to incentivise more people to get vaccinated.

COVID-19 tests or proof of vaccination or recovery will be required to access facilities including restaurants, cinemas and gyms, in areas where [infection rates](#) rise above a certain threshold.

From October those who refuse to get jabbed will have to pay to prove they are infection-free, or risk being shut out.

Proof of [test](#) or vaccination will be required as soon as the rate of infections in a region reaches 35 per 100,000 people over seven days.

Children and people who for health reasons cannot be vaccinated will still be able to get tested for free.

Germany's incidence rate stood on Tuesday at 23.5, but several regions including Berlin and Hamburg are already past the 35 mark.

After delivering well over one million jabs a day at its peak, Europe's most populous country has seen the takeup for inoculation against the coronavirus slow dramatically.

As of Tuesday, 52 million people in Germany—or 62.5 percent of the population—have received at least one dose of the [vaccine](#), but Merkel said she hoped another 15 to 20 percent would get the jab.

"It is everyone's responsibility ... to promote vaccination wherever possible," said German Chancellor Angela Merkel, urging "all friends and [family members](#) who have been vaccinated to promote this in their circles of friends and families and sport clubs".

'Indirect compulsory vaccination'

Merkel has repeatedly said she does not think it is right to make vaccinations compulsory.

But critics accused her government of using tests as a tool to pressure the population to get jabbed.

Alice Weidel, leader of the far-right AfD who is herself not vaccinated, said the move was an "indirect compulsory vaccination through restrictions, bans and additional burdens".

Merkel countered that vaccinated people cannot simply be asked to continue to be subject to restrictions because part of the population opted against jabs.

"We also have to think about those who work in hospitals, and overloading the health system must be ruled out," she added.

Germany's latest move is similar to new requirements in France of a health pass to access cinemas, cafes or trains.

The push by French President Emmanuel Macron for the health pass which is proof of either vaccination, a recent negative test or recovery from COVID-19, has sparked angry protests across France.

In Germany, regular protests have also broken out against coronavirus restrictions as well as vaccinations.

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