

France ends free COVID testing for all

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France on Friday stopped offering COVID tests free of charge for everyone, in the government's latest effort to incite holdouts to get vaccinated against the virus.

A recent negative test, proof of recovery or full vaccination is needed to get a health pass which is required for access to cafes, restaurants, sports

facilities and entertainment venues such as cinemas.

The tests were free of charge while France's vaccination drive got into full swing, but the government said it did not view them as an alternative to vaccinations once everybody who wanted a jab could easily get one.

The nearly seven million adults in France who are not, or only partly, vaccinated will now have to pay between 22 and 44 euros (\$25-\$50) per [test](#).

Tests will remain free for people with a [medical prescription](#), who have had recent contact with an infected person, who have tested positive recently or who are certified as [vaccine](#)-intolerant.

Apart from encouraging more people to get vaccinated, the measure will help the government rein in spending on COVID testing that is expected to total 6.2 billion euros (\$7.2 billion) this year, up from 2.2 billion in 2020.

The move comes against a backdrop of a continuing slowdown of the pandemic.

The fourth coronavirus wave appears to be over, with French COVID cases below the alert level of 50 new weekly cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

On Thursday, the [health authorities](#) reported just over 5,000 new COVID cases in the previous 24 hours.

Also starting Friday, some 2.7 people working in hospitals, clinics and [care homes](#) as well as firefighters and ambulance drivers must produce proof of full vaccination or risk having their work contract suspended and their pay docked.

Up to now, they only needed to show proof of at least one vaccine shot.

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