

Austria ends lockdown restrictions for vaccinated people

December 12 2021, by Emily Schultheis



Due to the lockdown, restaurants are closed and seats are blocked off in Vienna, Austria, Tuesday, Nov. 30, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Lisa Leutner

Austria ended lockdown restrictions for vaccinated people across most of the country on Sunday, three weeks after reimposing strict rules to

combat a rising wave of coronavirus infections.

The rules, which vary by region within the country, largely allow for the reopening of theaters, museums and other cultural and entertainment venues on Sunday. Shops will follow on Monday.

Some regions are reopening restaurants and hotels on Sunday, while others will wait until later in the month. In all cases, there will be an 11 p.m. curfew for restaurants, and masks will still be required on public transportation and inside stores and public spaces.

Chancellor Karl Nehammer last week called the move an "opening with a seatbelt," giving each of Austria's nine regions the ability to loosen or tighten restrictions based on the local situation.

Unvaccinated people will still be subject to the lockdown restrictions and should remain at home for all but a handful of specific reasons, like buying groceries, going to the doctor or exercising.

Since the start of the lockdown, new case numbers have plummeted in the small Alpine country. On Friday, Austria reported 367.5 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants, down from 1,102.4 on the first day of the lockdown in November.

However, hospitalizations from the virus haven't dropped as sharply as new case numbers. There are currently 567 coronavirus patients in intensive care units across the country, only slightly down from 572 on the first day of the lockdown last month.

Austrian officials have stressed that high rates of vaccination are necessary to control the virus—67.7% of the population is fully vaccinated, a relatively low rate for Western Europe. The government has introduced measures to put increasing pressure on unvaccinated

people to get the vaccine.

Among those measures are a nationwide vaccine mandate, which will go into effect in February for all residents age 14 and over. Those who don't comply will face fines of up to 3,600 euros (around \$4,000).

Tens of thousands of people have protested across the country in recent weeks, both against the [lockdown](#) restrictions and the coming vaccine mandate. Police said a Saturday demonstration in the capital city, Vienna, drew 44,000 people.

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Citation: Austria ends lockdown restrictions for vaccinated people (2021, December 12) retrieved 7 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-12-austria-lockdown-restrictions-vaccinated-people.html>

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