

COVID restrictions remain for Austria's unvaccinated

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Austria's partial COVID lockdown will end next week but unvaccinated people will still face restrictions, the country's chancellor said, as cases decrease following a dramatic spike last month.

Officials imposed a slew of measures on November 22 as new infections spiralled, straining hospitals and prompting the government to make COVID vaccines compulsory from February 2022.

Chancellor Karl Nehammer said a "positive trend" in recent infections meant the restrictions will end on Monday but the unvaccinated will remain banned from leaving home for non-essential reasons.

Those who cannot show an antibody certificate following a recent infection will face the same restrictions.

Under current rules, Austrians can only leave home to buy essentials, exercise or receive [medical care](#). Schools remain open but non-essential shops, restaurants, concert halls and cinemas are shut.

Nehammer, who was sworn in as chancellor on Monday, acknowledged the "strain" of the pandemic and that "for many, the limit of what is bearable has been overstepped".

The government is due to present its roadmap out of restrictions on Wednesday. Nehammer said his administration would be "as prudent as possible".

According to official figures published on Tuesday, Austria recorded more than 4,200 new coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours.

Daily case numbers reached 16,000 at the peak of the country's latest wave in mid-November.

More than 3,000 people are receiving hospital treatment for COVID-19, with 670 in [intensive care](#)—the highest figure registered this year.

Austria's vaccination rate had long been below the European average and has climbed from 66 percent to 71.2 percent in recent weeks before next year's proposed vaccine mandate.

According to leaks of the draft law for the measure, those refusing vaccination will be punished with a 600-euro (\$680-) fine which could be reimposed every three months.

The measures have prompted a series of large demonstrations adding to the country's political tumult, with Nehammer Austria's third chancellor in as many months.

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