

Austria further eases virus lockdown measures

28 April 2020



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Austria said Tuesday citizens would be allowed to leave the house for non-essential trips as it eases coronavirus lockdown measures, but said limits on gatherings and social distancing rules would remain in place.

Currently, residents are permitted to leave the house only for certain trips, including to go to work if they cannot do their jobs from home, or to buy food or seek medical care, according to restrictions rolled out in mid-March.

But from May 1, people will be permitted to leave their homes with fewer restrictions, as long as they do not meet in groups and respect social distancing rules.

Public gatherings will be limited to 10 people, or 30 for funerals, until at least the end of June.

Citizens are also expected to keep one meter (three feet) away from those they do not live with, and [face masks](#) will still be mandatory in shops and on [public transport](#).

"The important thing for every one of us is not to become overconfident but to carry on practising

these new norms of behaviour in a very conscious way," Health Minister Rudolf Anschober told reporters.

Some smaller shops were allowed to reopen two weeks ago as the government carried out a phased reversal of virus restrictions.

Anschober said Austria was able to continue loosening the lockdown because the reproduction number for the virus—the number of people infected from each individual case—had fallen below 0.6.

Austria has been spared the worst of the pandemic compared to some of its European neighbours, with 15,200 recorded cases and 569 deaths.

Meanwhile Vienna's mayor said Tuesday the city's municipal swimming pools would reopen on May 29, but with limits on visitors.

Restaurants and cafes are set to re-open on May 15, but with new rules in place: a maximum of four patrons, excluding children, are allowed at each table, which must be at least one metre apart.

Establishments are not allowed to offer items such as bread baskets and salt shakers for common use.

Diners are advised to book ahead and will have to be shown to their tables by staff, who should wear masks.

Cafes and restaurants will have to close by 11:00 pm.

Hotels are to be allowed to reopen for tourists from May 29, although the government has not said when restrictions on international travel could be eased.

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APA citation: Austria further eases virus lockdown measures (2020, April 28) retrieved 19 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-04-austria-eases-virus-lockdown.html>

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