

# Austria tightens virus measures to slow down omicron spread

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Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer takes part in a discussion of the federal government in Vienna, Austria, Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022 on the upcoming COVID-19 crisis coordination. Credit: AP Photo/Lisa Leutner

Austria's government announced new measures Thursday to slow down

the spread of the omicron coronavirus variant in the Alpine country.

"We have to adjust to a new situation with omicron, we have to adjust to the fact that the infection numbers will increase quickly," Chancellor Karl Nehammer told reporters in Vienna.

Existing measures such as banning the unvaccinated from many stores and cultural venues will be more strictly implemented as of next week, and the use of masks—FFP2 or K95 types—outdoors will be made mandatory if a distance from other people of at least two meters (6.5 feet) cannot be met. The government also called on Austrians to keep working from home if possible. At the same time it will reduce the quarantine period to five days if a negative test result can be presented.

Nehammer called on those who have not been vaccinated to get their shots quickly to avoid another lockdown. Austria went into a lockdown for several weeks at the end of last year to fight an infection surge. Case numbers went down then, but have been increasing again recently. On Thursday, the country recorded 8,853 new cases.

"Every single person in Austria can help to slow down the speed of the spread of the disease," Health Minister Wolfgang Mueckstein said.

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