

# Vienna faces temporary Easter virus lockdown

24 March 2021



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The Austrian capital Vienna and two neighbouring regions will enter a temporary lockdown over the Easter holiday, the government announced Wednesday, in a bid to ease pressure on intensive care units as coronavirus cases surge.

Health Minister Rudolf Anschober told a press conference that because "in eastern Austria we have the strongest spread of the British mutation" of the virus, restrictions on leaving the house will be introduced between April 1 and April 6 in Vienna and the federal states of Lower Austria and Burgenland.

Only specific exceptions such as buying food and daily exercise will be allowed and museums and non-essential shops will be shut.

In the eastern region the requirement to wear masks, already in force for [public transport](#), shops and official buildings, will be extended to all indoor spaces with more than one person.

Workplace testing will also be increased and cross-border commuters will be subjected to more

checks.

Anschober said no firm decision had been taken over what would happen to Easter church services.

In the week after Easter school pupils will follow [distance learning](#), with PCR tests necessary to rejoin in-person classes after that.

From April 7 a negative test result will also be necessary to enter non-essential shops.

The [government](#) had previously floated the prospect of restaurant terraces being allowed to open in March but so far only in the far western state of Vorarlberg have virus cases been low enough to permit this.

Anschober recognised Wednesday's decision would be disappointing to many, adding: "I would have liked to sit in a restaurant terrace too but it's just not possible now."

The new measures come as Vienna's hospitals experience heavy pressure from the rise in admissions, with [health officials](#) saying intensive care capacity will be increased by delaying operations.

The government had hoped that a mass testing strategy, in particular in schools, would help control infections.

However new cases have continued to rise, regularly exceeding 3,000 per day over the past two weeks.

On Wednesday more than half of new infections were recorded in the eastern part of the country affected by the new measures.

The government has come under heavy criticism in the press and the opposition for perceived chaos and indecision in its virus strategy and for failing to

stem a burgeoning third wave of infections.

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