

Vienna, 9 January 2021

Regular and free self-administered tests for school pupils in Austria – bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The fact that vaccinations against the coronavirus have begun in Austria means we can all “breathe a little easier”. At the same time, however, we still have several months of the virus ahead of us. I know that you are now expecting us to be able to make long-term plans. Unfortunately, despite the lockdown, the way in which infection rates are currently developing does not allow us to plan much more than a week ahead. As things currently stand, however, I still expect face-to-face teaching to resume on 18 January 2021, i.e. your child should be able to return to school on this date – but I cannot give any guarantees.

The hygiene measures that had previously been put in place at schools will, of course, continue to be implemented. However, the **introduction of a new, regular testing programme** will enable us – with your support – to make schools even safer. This is why I am writing to you today.

Painless self-administered tests for school pupils – results in 15 minutes

From when schools reopen until the semester break, all schools in Austria will be provided with around five million self-administered tests for school pupils. This test has **two key advantages**: the swab only needs to be inserted a short distance into the nose and the throat does not need to be swabbed – which means that this test is easy for people to carry out themselves. The result is displayed – in a similar way to a pregnancy test – after 15 minutes. Like other rapid tests, these self-administered tests are particularly effective in detecting cases with a high viral load. This in turn means that people who are highly infectious can quickly be identified.

Pupils at primary schools and special schools will receive tests and instructions for use to take home with them; all other pupils will carry out the tests under supervision at school

If your child attends a primary or special (SEN) school, you will receive the test and instructions at your child’s school. Your child can then take the test at home under your supervision. All other school pupils will take the test at school under the supervision of a teacher or school doctor.

Regular testing at least once a week

Testing will be conducted at regular intervals in order to create a long-term and comprehensive safety net. Initially, tests will be carried out once a week; the aim is for testing to be increased to twice a week.

Parental consent for children under 14 to be tested at school

If your child is between 10 and 14 years old, he/she will require your documented consent to take the test at school. You will receive the consent form at your school or you can download it from our website. Please sign the form and return it to your child's school.

How does the test work? Instructional video at bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest

A short video and simple step-by-step instructions on how to take the test are available at bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest. If you have any questions about the test, you can also download an information folder from this website. The folder is available in a number of different languages.

Self-administered tests are voluntary and free of charge

The self-administered tests are available to you and your child free of charge. There will be no consequences for you if you decide not to take part. However, the more children who participate in this regular testing, the safer school will be for your child – and for everyone else. I would urge you and your child to take part, or please encourage your child to do so.



Heinz Fassmann

Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research

Übersetzung des deutschsprachigen Informationsfolders für Eltern/Erziehungsberechtigte mit dem Titel: „Antigen-Selbsttests für Schülerinnen und Schüler“

Cover:

Self-administered antigen tests for school pupils bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest

- ✓ Swab inserted just 2 cm into the nose
- ✓ Brief and painless
- ✓ Result in 15 minutes
- ✓ Once a week
- ✓ Voluntary
- ✓ Free of charge

Inhalt:

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Although coronavirus vaccinations have now begun in Austria, we will continue to feel the impact of the virus in schools for several more months. However, regular testing of school pupils using the new self-administered antigen tests will enable us to make schools a much safer place. This requires the widespread participation of pupils. I would therefore urge you to encourage your child to take part in the new voluntary self-administered tests. This is because we need to work TOGETHER to combat the virus.

This folder provides an at-a-glance guide to what you and your child need to know about the self-administered antigen test.

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)

What is the self-administered antigen test?

Like other rapid tests, the self-administered antigen test indicates within just 15 minutes whether or not the person tested was infected with the coronavirus when the test was taken.

The self-administered test can play a key role in helping to contain the pandemic due to its rapid results and ease of use in schools. A new feature of this rapid test is that the people to be tested can carry out the test themselves.

Why can people carry out the test themselves?

Compared with other rapid tests, the self-administered antigen test has one key advantage with regard to the way in which it is taken: the swab no longer needs to be inserted deep into the upper nasal cavity; instead, it just has to be inserted 2 cm into each nostril. This simple procedure allows non-medical professionals to carry out the test themselves.

Where can my child take this test?

If your child attends a **primary school** or **special (SEN) school**, you will receive the test kit and instructions from your school and can carry out the **test at home**.

If your child attends a new secondary school (neue Mittelschule), lower level of an academic secondary school (AHS-Unterstufe), a school for intermediate vocational education (mittlere Schule) or a college for higher vocational education (höhere Schule), he/she can take the test at school.

How will the self-administered test be carried out?

An instructional video and simple instructions on how to carry out the test are available at bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest.

How will the test be carried out at school?

At school, the tests can be carried out in class in about 45 minutes. The room will be ventilated while the testing is being done. The class can be divided into two groups, A and B. Group A will take the test first, while group B continue to wear their face masks. Group B will then take the test while Group A wear their face masks. Schools are essentially free to decide where to conduct the tests – the gym would be another option, for example. It is important that the room is well ventilated, that social distancing from those taking the test is maintained, and – as is usual in lower secondary schools and above – that a face mask is worn by anyone not taking the test at that moment.

How often will the self-administered test be carried out?

Testing will initially be offered once a week; in the long-term, the aim is for school pupils to be tested twice a week.

What do parents need to do before their child can test himself/herself at school?

If your child is under the age of 14, you must give parental consent before he/she can take the test at school. Parents of pupils at new secondary schools or the lower cycle of academic secondary schools will receive the consent form at their school or can download it here: bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest. Please sign the form and return it to your school.

What happens if the test result is positive?

If your child took the test at home, please call 1450.

If your child tests positive at school, the school will contact you. The school will also inform 1450 and the local health authority.

Is the self-administered test voluntary and free of charge?

Yes. There will be no consequences for you or your child if you decide not to participate. However, the more children who regularly take part, the safer school will be for every child.

Do you have any questions?

bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest

BMBWF coronavirus hotline:

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