

Vienna, 14 April 2021

**New, more sensitive self-tests for pupils at new secondary schools,<sup>1</sup> the lower levels of academic secondary schools<sup>2</sup> and pre-vocational schools<sup>3</sup>**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Since January 2021, around 1.2 million school pupils and staff in Austria have been taking antigen self-tests several times a week. These tests have become a key tool in the fight against the pandemic – not just for schools but for the entire Austrian population. Regular and comprehensive testing allows us to continually monitor infection rates at schools and in particular – and very importantly – to ‘filter out’ highly infectious people. To date, the tests conducted at schools throughout Austria have enabled over 6,000 COVID-19 infections to be detected.

When self-testing was introduced at schools at the start of this year, we were all entering uncharted territory. Today, some three months after testing began, this uncharted territory has become part of everyday life, protecting us and – despite further lockdowns – allowing your children to attend school for at least a few days a week. I would like to thank you, your children and the teachers for coming together to successfully respond to this challenge.

**New, more sensitive self-test for your child**

I am writing to let you know that we will in future be providing pupils at new secondary schools, the lower levels of academic secondary schools and pre-vocational schools with a more sensitive test, the Flowflex test from the company ACON. ‘More sensitive’ means that this test is even more likely to detect whether someone is infected with COVID-19 than the test used previously. This test has been used by teachers and older pupils since testing began. For younger pupils, we started with an antigen test, which is slightly easier to use.

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<sup>1</sup> Neue Mittelschulen

<sup>2</sup> AHS-Unterstufen

<sup>3</sup> Polytechnische Schulen

Now that these pupils have had enough practice, we can switch to this more sensitive test in the 10-14 age group too.

### **How will the new self-test be carried out?**

Easy-to-follow instructions and a video demonstration of how to take the new test are available at [www.bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest](http://www.bmbwf.gv.at/selbsttest). The new test differs from the previous one in that, after swabbing the nose as usual, the test stick is inserted into a tube containing buffer solution, whereas in the previous test the stick was inserted into a test card. After the stick has been rotated in the tube several times, the tube is sealed with a cap and shaken. The cap is then opened and four drops of the liquid are dropped onto the well in the test strip. In practice, this means that the new test requires a little more dexterity. As an 'experienced tester', your child is sure to master this next stage with flying colours!

### **When will your child start using the new test at school?**

Schools have already received their first delivery of these tests for their pupils. Initially, however, schools will continue to use the tests they already have. Your school will then start using the new tests.

I would like to wish you and your family continued strength in these difficult times. Let's continue to work together to keep everyone safe – at school and elsewhere. We can only get through this crisis together.

Yours sincerely,



Heinz Fassmann

Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research