

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The coronavirus pandemic is a major challenge for us all. Our aim is to ensure that schools operate as normally as possible. Unfortunately, there is no let-up in the COVID-19 pandemic. With this in mind, we ask for your continued help in our efforts to contain the spread of the virus as much as possible. This includes not sending your children to school if they are displaying any signs of illness and – if they are over 6 – providing them with a face mask to wear at school.

Until now, any child in school with typical COVID-19 symptoms was considered a suspected case. The school office had to inform the health authority, which then usually ordered a (PCR) coronavirus test. There would be a wait before the test could be carried out and then another wait for the results. This often resulted in a great deal of upheaval at the school: parents had to stay at home with their child and wait for a test; teachers had to self-isolate and were unable to teach, even if the child did not test positive for the virus.

There is now a solution to this upheaval and to the uncertainty about whether or not a child has contracted COVID-19.

- The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) will be providing Austrian schools with rapid antigen tests.
- The evaluation of these tests does not require a laboratory. The result is available after 15 to 30 minutes.
- These tests are a very innovative and harmless way of determining whether any symptoms experienced by the pupils and staff at our school are caused by the virus.

I am therefore writing to encourage you to make use of this service and to give your consent for your child to have the rapid antigen test. Children over 14 can give this consent themselves. Participation is, of course, voluntary and no one will be forced to take the test. In addition, we will always contact you before your child is tested in order to discuss the specific situation with you and also to establish whether you can come to the school in time for the test if you wish to do so. You also have the option to withdraw your consent. If you do not wish to give your consent, the school office is obliged to report any suspicious symptoms to the health authority, which will then decide on further measures.

Use of the rapid tests provides an excellent opportunity for us all to help ensure that the school operates as smoothly as possible.

Finally, I have an urgent request: please continue to keep your child at home if he/she is displaying any signs of illness.

For further information, please refer to the appendix to this letter and to the official information provided by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research:
www.bmbwf.gv.at/antigentests.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Declaration of consent for the use of a rapid antigen test to investigate suspected COVID-19 cases at the school

A rapid antigen test can only be carried out with the agreement of the person to be tested or – in the case of school children under 14 years of age – the parent or guardian. This consent applies to the test and to the processing of data related to the test and its results.

Further information on how the test will be carried out is included in a letter of information attached to this declaration of consent. This letter of information and its appendix form the basis for the declaration of consent. This declaration of consent can be withdrawn at any time with future effect (by post, email or fax to the school). Withdrawal of the declaration of consent does not affect the legality of any data processing or measures that took place on the basis of consent given. Withdrawal does not affect the testing carried out by the health authority.

First and last name of the person to be tested:

Residential address:

Telephone number/email address
(of the parent or guardian) for notification of the test results:

I

- consent
- do not consent

to a nasopharyngeal swab (from the nose or throat) being taken from me or my child under the age of 14 by trained specialist staff if I or my child is suspected of having COVID-19.

Place

Date

Signature of the person aged 14 or over to be tested or of his/her legal guardian

Name (in capital letters)

APPENDIX: Further information

What happens if there is a suspected case?

If a case is suspected, the parent or guardian is notified first of all. The school office has the contact details of the parent or guardian for cases such as these (emergency contact details) and will discuss with him/her the further action to be taken.

- a) If a declaration of consent has been provided for the rapid antigen test, the mobile team will be notified. The parent or guardian will come to the school within one hour and will wait with his/her child for the test. If it has been agreed otherwise, the child can also have the test without a parent or guardian being present. If the parent or guardian is unable to be at the school within one hour, the declaration of consent can be withdrawn.
- b) If no declaration of consent has been provided, the parent or guardian will be asked to collect the child (or make arrangements for the child to be collected) as quickly as possible. According to the Epidemics Act, the school office must then notify the health authority and set in motion the process chain in accordance with COVID-19 hygiene, prevention and procedural guidelines.
- c) If no declaration of consent has been provided, the school office and parent or guardian can agree in a phone call that the test should nevertheless be carried out. In this case, the declaration of consent can be signed at the school. The parent or guardian must then be at the school within one hour.

Who will test my child?

In our federal state, mobile test teams will be available **from XX November 2020** to carry out the rapid tests at schools. These will be coordinated by a central office **at the Board of Education/by the Red Cross/XXX**. The tests will always be conducted by qualified medical personnel. They will be carried out sensitively using a nasopharyngeal swab, which involves taking a swab of the nose or throat. If a school doctor is available at the school, he/she can also perform the test.

When will my child be tested?

If a teacher notices that your child is unwell and the school believes that the symptoms could be related to a COVID-19 infection, a test will be carried out. The most common symptom in children under 10 is a temperature over 38°C. In children over 10, symptoms may include a cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or a sudden loss of smell or taste; these can also be accompanied by a high temperature. We are following the recommendations of the Ministry of Health in this regard.

What happens when the test result is available?

In most cases, a negative test result can quickly give the all-clear. Nevertheless, we would ask you to collect your child from school if he/she is not feeling well. Only if your child tests positive will the school office contact the health authority and set in motion the process chain in accordance with COVID-19 hygiene, prevention and procedural guidelines.