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Our knowledge about the Corona-pandemic is quickly superseded by new findings our laws and regulations have difficulties keeping pace with, to mitigate the spread of the disease. Common sense is required, or, as they say in Austria: »home sense«.

Stay positive, test negative – this wishes you your

Oliver Schuster

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Café Sacher at the world famous eponymous hotel: the embodiment of Vienna coffeehouse culture.

Off to The Café

Vienna during its 2nd autumn in the time of Corona

After lifting general shutdowns because of corona it's not easy to get a table in one of the most highly touted Vienna coffeehouses: long lines form quickly. It's people who didn't call in for a reservation but are yearning for their cup of "Brauner" (espresso with a small dash of milk), or iconic "Melange" (espresso with some milk). Difficult to say where all those people come from. They are definitely not Chinese; the pre-Corona times ubiquitous Chinese tourists haven't returned

spelled out the last name, till finally the *maitre d' locates* the name, his somewhat doubting expression relaxes and one is guided to one's table. A waiter quickly sprays the table top one more time and wipes it with a "Fetzen" (rag) to kill any remnants of viruses and bacterias.

One relaxes in one's chair but we are not done yet: the taking of personal information so that in case of an outbreak customers can be contacted. Only then you are handed the



In front of Café Central
like at other famous locations
tourists have to wait — often
for hours — to be admitted ...

yet. The "locals" know better: in need of their daily "shot of caffeine" they call their favorite coffeehouse be it *Sacher*, *Demel* or *Central* one or more days before to reserve their table, and then march along the frowning glances of lined-up people straight into the place.

Well, not so fast! First one has to be checked according to the "3-G" documentation: German past principles starting with the syllable "ge-" (pronounced "gay") it's now used for "having been (that is, 'ge-') vaccinated for, or recovered from, or tested for" corona-virus. Then, an additional check: a check against the reservation list. In case of doubt, the *maitre d'* has one

menu. Of course, instead of a paper-and-pencil registration you also could register with your QR code on your cell phone. But many people are suspicious of this method; if it's a paper registration one can fairly assume that after the required time (or even earlier) of keeping it for four weeks it will find its way into the trash or a banker's box in the basement or attic to be forgotten there.

Waiters in the café are required to put on an N95/FFP2 mask, at least till they are out of view of customers. Obviously, to consume their coffee be it a "Brauner" or "Melange" and maybe morsels to go with it, customers take their face masks off. ☹

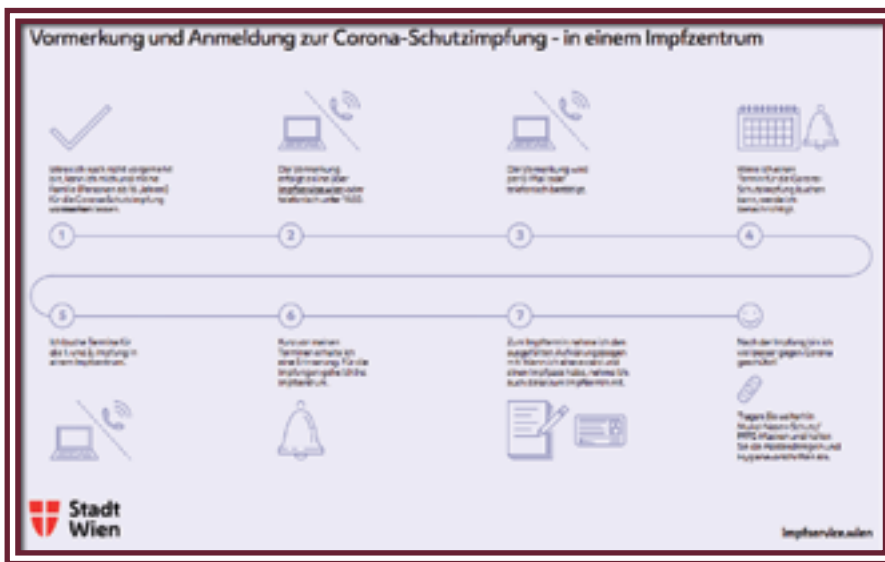
Since January 2021, Vienna's Municipal Health Authority has been carrying out corona-virus vaccinations. First, the serum developed by Germany's BioNTech was in short supply and consequently vaccinations were mostly limited to old peoples' homes, as well as for people with life threatening preconditions, generally peo-

However, by July of 2021, the situation improved: greater quantities of serum became available. Vaccinations were offered pretty much everywhere: hospitals, GP clinics, supermarkets, company offices, even sports stadiums. Additionally, mobile vaccination operations, such as "vaccination buses" were offered.

One's Way to Get Your Corona Shot

quite simply:
it's complicated

Information scheme on how to get an appointment for vaccination — not that easy if you don't know your way around computers.



ple over 65 and obese people (based on Body Mass Index numbers) which probably qualified a fair number of younger people as well.

Registering could be done on the City's website which wasn't very easy to navigate. It was doubtful that seniors would be able to find their way around it. Also, as already mentioned, in the beginning serum was in short supply.

Then-chancellor Kurz's very publicized efforts to produce a vaccine with help from Israel, acquire on short-time basis a quantity of Russia's Sputnik V's serum was nothing more than a PR gag. Nevertheless, Kurz's PR machine published reports that, supposedly, 70% of Austrians favored importation of Sputnik V vaccine.

Still, even with these very generous efforts — all tests and vaccinations have been free of charge —, vaccination rates in Vienna of adults just plugged along; in October they only had reached 62 percent. On 2021 October 15th Vienna's rate of incidence per 100 000 inhabitants stood at 128.5.

To compare rates in Germany: at the same time, 66 percent of people were vaccinated; rate of incidence was 68.7, only half of that of Vienna. ☒

To Stop the Spread of Infection

How to best proceed

With incidences still high antigen and PCR tests are becoming ever more important. These tests help to quickly identify infected persons, to limit the spread of the disease. The City of Vienna installed several test centers, one of the most pleasing one is in the rooms of the orangery in Schönbrunn palace. Waiting time was 20 minutes, the time needed for an antigen test to show results. That

validity of test results were decreased: Though still free of charge testing became unattractive for adults; but for people not yet admissible for vaccinations such as children and for persons with health preconditions they still have their purpose.

Now, a PCR test only is valid for 48 hours after taking the sample; for antigen tests, it's 24 hours. That should lead unvaccinated persons to finally come to the point to get their vaccination. But one can imagine that diehard anti-vaxxers will still resist. In Upper Austria, one of Austria's provinces, a newly created political party called MFG (Menschen – Freiheit – Grundrechte = People – Freedom – basic rights) proposing anti-vaxxing received 6.7 percent of seats in the provincial assembly at first go.

End of March the City of Vienna introduced a PCR self-test under the motto *everybody gargles*, be it city inhabitant, commuter or tourist, who could do their test with the free-of-charge provided package, get a sample of their saliva, bring it to the nearest REWE drugstore, and have their result within 24 hours or even less.

One gargles the provided liquid in front of their computer or smart phone camera taking the picture, saves it, sends it via e-mail to the lab, and drops the vial with the saliva in a box in the drugstore. 24 hours later the lab sends via e-mail or SMS the result. If one deposits the sample before nine A.M. at REWE, one reasonably can expect the result to be transmitted the same evening. After entering one's password a written report can be transmitted as well, ready to be printed out on your computer, good for your next trip to a foreign country. ☑



Easy to reach – Entrance to the test- and vaccination lanes, inside the Austria Center building.

waiting time was brightened by the lookout at the park of Schönbrunn. For that test you had to register yourself on-line and you were assigned a time window. As mentioned, several test centers were installed throughout the city: a total of ten. At large parking spots, there were drive-in test centers: you didn't have to get out of your car, they swabbed you right in your car. Most pharmacies also provided testing free-of-charge. At Vienna's Opera, and at Vienna's international airport there were also testing places, but one had to pay for these last minute tests. With vaccinations in the increase testing rates declined. To further increase vac-

*) REWE operates in Austria the following divisions: BILLA, BILLA PLUS, BIPA and PENNY; gas stations with convenience sections: BP MERKUR inside, JET BILLA STOP 7 SHOP, SHELL BILLA Unterwegs

Gargle Boxes

Operating in a digital environment isn't everybody's thing even notwithstanding people in the street staring at or talking into their smart-phone being a common sight. There may be quite a number of people not being able to handle their gargle test on-line; others may not even have internet access at their place. To make it easier for those the City of Vienna installed so-called gargle-boxes, modified shipping container, where people can line up at the window, receive the liquid in a vial, gargle with it under the supervision of the medical technician, spit it into the vial, seal it and hand it to the him or her. The printed test result can be picked up at the same gargle box after 24 hours.

How often one takes a test depends on the person (whether vaccinated or unvaccinated). Some do it regularly, others only if needed, e.g. before visiting an old peoples' home, or after a longer trip by public transportation. In case of not feeling well, prolonged coughing, loss of taste or smell, common sense would dictate taking a test.

On their web-page the City of Vienna also publishes their test statistics; e.g.: As of Friday, 15 October 2021 incidence of positive tests since start of the pandemic stood at 173 488, persons recovered numbered 165 585.

Deaths caused by the virus directly or indirectly were at 2 462, latest number of deaths were four. Active cases were 5 441. These numbers include 465 cases reported for 14 October and 23 cases for 13 October, 10 reports less on 12 October, 2 reports less on 11 October. To put it in two words: tendency rising!

Should one have tested positive and is registered with the City on-line,

there is a nearly immediate reaction by e-mail:

Hello! You were tested positive for SARS-CoV2/Corona Virus. Please stay at home and refrain from socializing with other people! Should you at present not stay in Vienna contact



us directly by return e-mail with your present address (street name, street number, floor number, apartment number, zip code, town); we will then forward your data to the appropriate health authority.

If you are staying in Vienna you will be contacted by phone from our Contact Tracing department as soon as possible. Please be ready to provide us with the following:

Delay of seven weeks between testing and official test report (registered mail, return receipt requested).

- *Data of person(s) living with you in the same household*
- *List of locations you stayed at within the last 14 days, particularly within the last 48 hours from experiencing first symptoms. If you don't have symptoms, within 48 hours before taking your test.*
- *Trip(s) to domestic or/and foreign locations within the last 14 days: exact address(es) of stay(s), mode of transportation (flight number; train, bus number; seat number); to/from date(s) of trip. Data of any person(s) in the foreign country/countries you socialized with; your stays in the foreign country (hospitality industry establishments you went to, events you attended)*
- *Data of persons you socialized with within the last 48 hours after you experienced first symptoms; if you don't have symptoms, within 48 hours before taking your test.*
- *Vaccination records, anti-body reports, recovery reports, if any.*

You can find more information on our website www.wien.gv.at/coronavirus.

Yours truly, City of Vienna
Contract Tracing Team

Seven weeks after that I received a letter from the City of Vienna, registered, return receipt requested. It contained a 6-page long report about the SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 infection. Note that within those seven weeks there were no other contacts, by any means, from the City's Contact Tracing Team.

Receipt of that letter was delayed. The mailman who came by on a Friday did not come and ring at my apartment door but simply dropped an official mail notification in my downstairs mailbox informing me that the letter can be picked up at the local post office on or after Monday the following week.

In the letter itself a lengthy section explained the reason for leveling an administrative fine if not complying, it is a punishable offense under § 47 of the law on epidemics. It also lines out that in such a case an appeal may be filed. The letter, dated several weeks after Contract Tracing Team's initial

(and only) e-mail — and dispatched several weeks after the letter date — also pointed out that one can test oneself “out of quarantine” after five days of imposed ten-day quarantine if a test shows to be negative.

Had I received the letter in due time, I could have tried to get out of it by having a test done again. It's aggravating to the affected person to find out that a negative test five days after the very first one would have allowed one to return to “normal” life: leaving home-bound quarantine, returning to work, etc. The result of this ineffective corona management is that the costs of it are for account of the State, which means for account of the tax payer.

The only good thing resulting from this unnecessarily extended and possibly wrongly imposed quarantine is that I did a small contribution to the preservation of the environment by not driving or shopping. ☒

Impressum



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