



To
All students aged 18 and over

Covid testing rules from 10 August 2022

Dear Students,

I am writing to you today to provide you with information about the Covid rules that will apply in schools in North Rhine-Westphalia from 10 August 2022.

Although the ongoing pandemic is currently causing high levels of infection, the number of people with serious illness – especially those patients who need intensive care – is low and remains stable at this level. The level of immunity in the population – which also includes school students and teachers – has also become much higher as a result of vaccinations and the number of people who have had a Covid infection. At the moment, this means we can pursue our social activities without major restrictions or complicated safety rules. In this phase of the pandemic, it is important that people show personal responsibility, based on their experience in dealing with the virus. This is true both in day-to-day life and when attending school.

As we know, an infection with the virus variant that is dominant at the moment can cause symptoms that mean someone will be unable to attend school for a few days. While this means Covid-19 is just like many other illnesses, it does make organising classes and teaching at the school very difficult in situations where a lot of students and teachers become affected at the same time. The best way to handle this situation is to continue to show personal responsibility and follow effective rules for preventing infection. This approach will ensure that the health risks from the coronavirus pandemic will continue to be kept as low as possible

in our schools. Schools will also be emphasising the need to take personal responsibility for dealing with the virus and actively supporting this approach. Social distancing should be used where it makes sense to do so. We also recommend washing hands regularly and wearing a face mask if possible. Frequent ventilation of classrooms will continue as before.

We have also adopted a new testing strategy: this will involve 'on-demand' testing at home. As a student attending school, this means that you should test yourself (and stay at home if you get a positive test result) if you develop the typical kinds of symptoms for Covid-19 – like a cough, runny nose, sore throat, loss of taste/smell or a high temperature.

Your local authority will provide the Covid-19 self-tests (rapid antigen tests) needed. The testing kits will be handed out to students by the school. These kits can then be used for voluntary on-demand self-testing at home. Schools will also be offering a test for students on the first day back at school.

If, while attending school, you have or develop obvious symptoms of a respiratory infection – and therefore a suspected case of Covid infection – then your teacher will ask you to complete an on-demand test using a rapid antigen test. If you tested yourself at home before school that day and got a negative test result, you will not normally need to be tested again. Instead, show your teacher a confirmation of the negative test from home testing.

In this way, we are giving you the opportunity to avoid situations where you need to be tested at school. If you have symptoms, you can test yourself at home before school and then take appropriate proof of your negative test result into school. In such cases, a second test at school will only be necessary if your symptoms obviously become much worse during the school day.

Dear Students,

As we continue our fight against the Covid pandemic in our schools, I will once again be relying on your effective cooperation with schools and school staff. I am convinced that we can hold the pandemic in check in our schools, and can work to reduce transmission if everyone takes responsibility for themselves and others. By now, we all know how this can be done. All we have to do is to make sure we act accordingly whenever that may be necessary. Keeping our schools open as places of learning and interaction is in everyone's interests.

I wish all of you a healthy and successful start to the 2022/2023 school year.

Best regards,


Dorothee Feller