

Berlin to require negative COVID-19 tests for entry to non-essential businesses

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Berlin, March 31 (RHC)-- Berlin will require residents to show that they have tested negative for COVID-19 before being allowed in certain shops and cultural institutions, as part of new restrictions aimed at containing the spread of the virus.

Beginning immediately, all shoppers in the German capital have to present a daily negative test result before entering a store. Cultural institutions such as museums and galleries also now require a negative test for entry. Proof of vaccination or antibodies will not be accepted. The rule does not apply to essential services such as supermarkets and pharmacies.

The German capital city will offer a minimum of one free test per week at 170 centers set up around the capital, but there is currently no set limit to how many can be taken without paying. Retailers have also been asked to set up test points in parking lots, and will be provided with medical personnel to help out.

According to local media, tests administered at home will not be accepted because there is no way to confirm their authenticity or when they were administered.

The Berlin Senate imposed the rule as part of a set of new measures aimed at containing the growing number of cases in the city while avoiding a full shutdown. The body also instructed businesses that are primarily computer-based to let at least 50% of their staff work from home. Firms were also ordered to test employees twice a week. Restrictions on gatherings, which currently only allow up to five people from two different households, remain the same.

The measures come a week after German Chancellor Angela Merkel canceled a strict five-day national lockdown over the Easter holiday which would have closed all businesses, with supermarkets only permitted to operate for one day during the period. The German leader withdrew the plan after facing pushback from political allies as well as the public.

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