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Press release from the Directorate of Health, Social Services and Integration on 12 January 2021

Coronavirus: Information for the Population and Guests of Wengen and the Surrounding Area

The following communication from the Directorate of Health, Social Services and Integration informs the population and guests of Wengen and the surrounding area about the situation regarding the increased incidence of the coronavirus. This message is addressed to the population of Wengen and the surrounding area. It will also be published on the canton's media portal.

What happened?

Yesterday, the Health Department of the Canton of Bern, with the involvement of the organisers, SwissSki and the FIS, decided to cancel the Lauberhorn Race 2021. The alarming epidemiological development in Wengen was the reason.

In Wengen, there have been about 70 confirmed coronavirus cases since the beginning of the pandemic. All of these cases have occurred in the second pandemic wave since October 2020; 60 of them since 14 December. Of these, 28 positive cases were recorded in a single hotel between 27 December, 2020 and 10 January, 2021. This happened after a tourist from the UK stayed there and was later tested positive for the new coronavirus variant (B1.1.7). After that, there have been many transmissions among the hotel staff. In addition, there have been transmissions to other people in Wengen. So far, variant B1.1.7 has been confirmed with 6 persons up to now; further confirmations are still pending. Based on the clarifications by the cantonal contact tracing, it can be assumed that most or even all positive cases belong to variant B1.1.7.

What does this mean?

The chains of COVID-19 transmission are not yet broken. New cases are therefore constantly showing up. The development of the spread in Wengen is very dynamic. The current state of about 70 cases has developed practically from zero within only two weeks.

There are currently no indications that the course of disease is more severe with variant B1.1.7 than with the previous coronavirus. However, it can be assumed that this variant is more contagious and transmissions happen even faster.

What do you have to do?

Due to the even greater risk of infection from variant B1.1.7, you are requested to continue to strictly follow the hygiene and protective measures. Wear a mask in rooms that cannot be well ventilated or if the minimum distance cannot be maintained. Reduce your physical social contacts to the absolute minimum and stay at home whenever possible.

Urgent recommendation for testing

Get tested even if you have very mild symptoms of COVID-19. You can also get tested without symptoms. Even if you are planning to leave, you should definitely get tested in advance. Hoteliers are

asked to inform their guests of this urgent recommendation and to assist guests in making an appointment. The Canton of Berne, together with local service providers, will make increased testing capacity available from January 13th.

By taking a test, you prevent yourself from passing on the virus if you are infected with it. We are therefore dependent on your cooperation and willingness to be tested in order to contain the spread of the virus.

What is the next step?

The broader testing will help the authorities to assess how widespread the virus is in Wengen. Based on this, the authorities can then assess whether further measures should be taken, such as further targeted testing or a closure or partial closure of the ski area.

Note

Corona Testing in Wengen

The population of Wengen as well as the guests can register for corona testing from tomorrow, Wednesday, 13 January 2021, 12:00 - 16:00 by calling 033 856 66 86.

Testing will start at 12:00 on the first day.

From Thursday, 14 January 2021, registration will be possible via this telephone number from 10:00 - 16:00. Testing will begin at 10:00 a.m.

Testing will also take place on Saturday and Sunday.

For further information to media:

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