



Hannover, 2 February 2022

Introduction of mandatory testing for children aged 3 and over attending day care

Dear parents and guardians,

As has already been reported in the press, 15 February 2022 marks the start of mandatory testing for all children aged 3 and over in daycare (please note: this relates to both daycare facilities and childminders). This also applies to schoolchildren in holiday childcare clubs. Previously, these tests were voluntary; starting on 15 February, regular testing is mandatory for your child if they go to daycare.

The intention is that all children can continue to attend daycare – indeed, this is our stated aim. We therefore need measures in place, such as regular testing, so that children and staff are protected. Given the dynamic situation due to infections with Omicron, compulsory testing is a further integral part of the strategy to improve safety. Infections may be detected early, and chains of infection may be broken, at an early stage.

The Lower Saxony federal-state authorities will procure three tests per week for each child and supply these to child and youth social services (*Jugendämter*) for distribution to local daycare providers. You will obtain testing kits for your child free of charge from your childminder or other daycare provider. At present, most of these are nasal-swab tests; they will, however, be replaced by lollipop tests as soon as the latter are available again in sufficient quantities.

All tests issued by the federal-state authorities are certified and approved. This is still the case if you find that a test issued to you appears to have the same name as one included on the 'negative list' of tests that do not meet standards, published by the Paul Ehrlich Institute (PEI, the federal medical regulatory body). The full/detailed name of your test will generally differ from that on the list; the listed tests are not identical with the tests made available by the federal-state authorities. So please do not be put off by this.

If your child does not tolerate testing, another option is 'household testing'. This involves a parent – or another contact person from the child's household – testing themselves instead. If you are in this situation, please consult with the daycare manager or childminder on how to proceed here.

Here is an overview of all the rules on mandatory testing for children attending daycare:

- Mandatory testing applies to all children aged 3 and above, including those who have been vaccinated or have 'recovered' status. Only children with 'boosted' status – i.e. all those who have been vaccinated three times, or those vaccinated twice who have 'recovered' status – are exempt from this requirement.
- For children attending an after-school daycare (Hort), the testing requirement applies only during school holidays. At other times, tests are mandatory at school.
- The testing mandate requires at least three tests per week. On which precise days testing takes place is up to your daycare provider.
- You will receive the required test kits free of charge through your daycare provider.
The tests issued are PoC antigen tests for self-testing, and are suitable for children.
- In general, testing is to be carried out at home prior to attending daycare. However, the daycare facility or childminder may specify that testing will take place under supervision at the daycare location.
- Parents or guardians are required to confirm to the daycare provider that the test result was negative. The daycare facility or childminder will tell you how to notify them.
- If your child refuses to take a test, please let the daycare manager or childminder know. You then have the option of testing an adult contact person from the same household (household testing). Proof of a negative test result must be provided.
- The legal basis for the testing mandate is the provisions of Sec. 15(2) of the coronavirus regulations (*Corona-Verordnung*) for Lower Saxony, as amended on 2 February 2022.

- When the testing mandate comes into effect, untested children shall generally have no access to daycare facilities and childminding premises.

I would like to thank you for your willingness to support the testing mandate. Your commitment is a valuable contribution towards protecting children and staff from infection at childcare locations. My hope is that the Omicron wave will soon be over, making everyday normality possible – at least to a greater extent. I am well aware of just how much effort is involved in keeping children and young people stable, safe and secure during these challenging times. All the best to you and your families, and do stay safe and well!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janet Rankin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.