



Coronavirus National Testing Programme Frequently Asked Questions for Essential Workers

This document covers useful information for essential workers about coronavirus testing. It includes advice on knowing if you or members of your household are eligible for testing, what the test involves and the different ways in which you can get tested. This document can be read alongside guidance on using the new [Self-Referral Portal](#), which is an easy to use website where you can register yourself and members of your household for testing.

If you experience problems once you've booked your coronavirus test, you can contact the Coronavirus Testing Call Centre on 0300 303 2713 for assistance. The call centre is open daily from 08:00-20:00. **This call centre does not offer medical advice.** If you are unwell please call NHS 111 and in a medical emergency, please dial 999.

Currently, this testing offer applies in England and Scotland only. We are working closely with the Devolved Administrations on the approach to testing, and this includes working with them on appropriate solutions for booking into their testing sites. Decisions about eligibility for testing are made by the Devolved Administrations.

1. What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

The symptoms of coronavirus are a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature. For more information, visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms-and-what-to-do/>

2. What is the purpose of being tested?

Getting tested is important to understand if you, or a member of your household has coronavirus, so that you will know what steps to take to look after yourself, protect others and know if you are fit to return to work.

The test will tell you if you currently have the virus. It will not tell you if you have previously had the virus.

Testing does not replace your clinical care, and if you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition worsens, or your symptoms do not get better after seven days, then use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/> If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

3. Am I an essential worker?

The National Testing Programme has expanded capacity to test even more essential workers who are self-isolating due to having coronavirus symptoms or because a member of their household has symptoms. The full list of eligible workers can be found here:



www.gov.uk/coronavirus-get-tested Devolved Administrations operate their own eligibility criteria.

4. When should I or my household member(s) be tested?

You should get tested in the first three days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day five. No testing should be undertaken after day five, unless it's for a specific reason which will be agreed on a case by case basis by local microbiologists.

If you are self-isolating because a person you live with has symptoms, you can refer them for testing. By testing the household member(s), we can be much more certain that you should either be self-isolating or can return to work.

5. Why can't people get tested if they do not have symptoms?

The test only checks if you have coronavirus right now. The test will give you confidence to decide whether you are safe to return to work if you don't have the virus, or to remain in isolation if you test positive for coronavirus.

6. Can my child get a test?

If an essential worker is self-isolating due to an under-18 in their household showing coronavirus symptoms, the child is eligible for a test.

Children aged 12-17 can use the test themselves or have their parent or guardian perform the test. Children aged 5-12 must have the test performed by a parent or guardian.

Test kits are unsuitable for under-fives. If your child under-five has coronavirus symptoms, please follow current NHS guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Unfortunately, not all test centres are able to accept children aged 5-11 right now, but we are working hard to expand this service across all test centres as fast as we can. The regional test sites that currently offer tests to 5-17 year olds are:

- Aberdeen Airport
- Belfast, Odyssey Arena
- Birmingham, Midlands Metropolitan
- Brighton, AMEX Stadium
- Bristol
- Cardiff
- Doncaster Airport
- Edinburgh Airport
- Gatwick Airport
- Ipswich
- Londonderry, City Rugby Club
- London, Greenwich O2
- London, NHS Nightingale



- London, Twickenham
- Milton Keynes
- Portsmouth
- Stansted Airport
- Worcester Sixways Stadium

All sites will offer testing to 12-17 year olds from 25 April onwards.

7. I'm an essential worker but I don't have a car. How can I get tested?

Home test kits are now available. You order them via the Self-Referral Portal and Amazon deliver the kit to your home. You perform the test on yourself following the detailed instructions that come with the kit. Royal Mail couriers will collect your sample and you will receive the results within 72 hours. You can order up to five test kits for your household.

Currently, this testing offer applies in England and Scotland only.

8. I'm based in Scotland/Wales but I live closer to test sites in England OR I travel into England for work. Can I use a test site closer to home/near work?

Where essential workers are based in one nation, if they are able to safely access a test site in another then they may do so, as long as they meet the eligibility requirements for that test site. However, we would discourage anyone from travelling an excessive distance to do so, particularly if they are feeling very unwell.

9. What will the test tell me?

The test will confirm if an individual who is showing symptoms of the virus currently *has* it. It will not confirm whether they *have had* it and have now recovered. Like any diagnostic test however, there is always the *small* possibility of a false negative or a false positive result.

If you received a negative result you can return to work immediately, but only if you are well enough. If all household member(s) test comes back negative you can return to work, but self-isolate straight away if you or they later develop symptoms.

If any member of the household receives a positive result, please continue to follow the [national guidance](#).

10. How does the test work?

The test involves taking a swab of the throat and nose. A single swab is used to collect a sample from the back of your throat and your nose. This swab is then placed into a sample tube and securely packaged, where it is sent to the lab for testing. Depending on where you get tested, you will either have a trained member of our team take your swab or be asked to do it yourself.



11. Why is it ok to take a single swab?

Providing satisfactory samples are taken from both the back of the throat and the nose, a single swab is perfectly adequate and consistent with Public Health England guidance on appropriate collection of samples of this type.

12. Does the test hurt? How long does it take?

You may experience some mild discomfort and you may feel a gagging sensation, but it should not hurt. How long it takes depends slightly on the person, but it is a quick process and is usually completed within a matter of minutes.

13. When and how will people receive their results?

When you take your test, you will be told how your result will be passed to you. This may be by email or by text or both. We are aiming to return results within 48 hours of tests taken at regional test sites and 72 hours for home tests.

14. Who do I contact if I don't understand my test results?

If you do not understand your test result and you are concerned about your health and wellbeing following your test result, please contact NHS 111 or your local GP.

15. What do I do if I haven't received my test results?

If you haven't received your result, please call the Coronavirus Testing Call Centre on 0300 303 2713. You should continue to apply the [national guidance](#) on self-isolation while waiting for your result.

If you have followed this guidance and your self-isolation period has completed, you can return to work.

16. If I test negative, and then later I develop symptoms, can I get tested again?

Yes. If you are experiencing coronavirus symptoms, your employer may refer you again to be tested.

17. If you previously tested positive for coronavirus and have another episode of symptoms, do you need to self-isolate again?

If your first illness was so severe you were prioritised for a coronavirus test and the result was positive, you will probably have developed immunity to coronavirus. Your new symptoms are very unlikely to be due to coronavirus and therefore you and your household do not need to isolate.



However, if another person in your household develops symptoms and they have not previously tested positive for coronavirus, then they need to isolate along with all other members of the household except for you (as you have already tested positive).

If you are concerned about your new possible coronavirus symptoms (a new, continuous cough or a high temperature), use the 111-coronavirus service <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/> or call NHS 111.

For up to the minute information for households with possible coronavirus, please see refer to the [national guidance](#)

18. How reliable is the test?

The test is reliable and effective. There are different tests in use under this programme and all have been assessed as performing to manufacturers specifications before being used. In addition, the newly established Lighthouse laboratories that will undertake the majority of the tests have been reviewed by experts as part of their set up and each has a clinical virology lead.

19. How will my personal information be handled? Will my manager have access to my results?

Your results are only communicated to you. It is for you to choose if you want to discuss your results with your employer.

We will not agree to release data to employers on individual's test results or an individual's engagement with the test programme.

Information on how personal data is managed is available here [Privacy Information](#)