



HM Government



THE CORONAVIRUS NATIONAL TESTING PROGRAMME

One of the most challenging things about coronavirus is the uncertainty: not knowing who has the infection or when it's safe to return to normal life. Good quality testing can help provide us with greater certainty. It's a big part of how we're going to defeat this disease.

As part of the Government's [five-pillar strategy](#) for coronavirus testing, we are testing people who have coronavirus-like symptoms to see if they currently have the virus. Our aim is that anyone who needs such a test will be able to have one. But that will take time to achieve. While we are building up our testing capacity at pace, we have offered testing to different groups in a phased approach.

Who can get tested?

Our top priority for testing is patients in hospital, to inform their clinical diagnosis, followed by NHS and social care workers having to self-isolate because either they, or a member of their household, have symptoms.

We now have the capacity to give every person in these categories a test who needs one.

As a next step, we now have the capacity to start to test other frontline workers in England who are having to self-isolate because either they, or a member of their household, have symptoms. Like with NHS and social care workers, we want to find out if these people have the virus – and, if they don't, they might be able to return to their work that is so important



for our country. The devolved authorities operate their own eligibility criteria.

Eligible workers list

We are already working with central government departments, national agencies and local resilience forums to get additional frontline workers in their areas tested, including police officers, fire and rescue service employees, and those running the justice system.

The full list of eligible workers in England now includes:

- All NHS and social care staff, including hospital, community and primary care, and relevant staff providing ancillary support to frontline NHS services (e.g. accommodation, catering) and voluntary workers;
- Police, fire and rescue services;
- Local authority staff, including those working with vulnerable children and adults, with victims of domestic abuse, and with the homeless and rough sleepers;
- Defence, prisons and probation, and judiciary staff;
- Front-line benefits workers.

In addition, government departments, national agencies and local resilience forums have discretion to refer other frontline workers in their area for testing as determined by local need and available capacity. This includes frontline workers in the private sector, with a focus on staff delivering key medical, energy, utility, transport and food supplies. Wherever we have the capacity, we will test these workers.

More detailed information on the types of workers who may now be eligible for testing in England can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus-get-tested



Booking a test

Anyone who thinks they are eligible and would like to be tested should speak to their employer. The relevant employers in England will be provided with information on how to make an appointment either via their local resilience forum (where the local region chooses to organise testing in this way), via their national government department/agency, or direct from the Department of Health and Social Care. Any employer that has any queries should contact their local resilience forum, national government department/agency, or the Department of Health and Social Care on opshub@dhsc.gov.uk

The devolved authorities operate their own eligibility criteria.

We are developing an online booking system that will enable all eligible frontline workers to register for a test directly. We will publish further details on this as soon as the development has been completed.

How the testing process works

The test involves taking a swab of the nose and the back of the throat, which can be done by the subject themselves (self-administered) or by someone else for them (assisted).

In order to test large numbers of patients, NHS, social care, and other frontline workers, we have set up a range of options from scratch. This has been an enormous challenge. But the public and private sectors have come together to meet it.

Testing routes

- For patients and NHS workers, testing can be done within an NHS facility such as a hospital;
- We are establishing a network of up to 50 drive-through regional testing sites by the end of April. You can view an animation that explains the process online [here](#);



- We are developing mobile testing units, which could be based at a regional testing site and travel to take tests to where they are needed the most;
- We are bolstering the NHS' capabilities by providing test kits directly to 'satellite' centres at places like hospitals that have a particularly urgent or significant requirement; and
- We are developing a home test kit that can be delivered to someone's door so they can test themselves, and their family, as required without leaving the house.

Collection and results

Across all these methods, we have a fantastic network of couriers who collect the completed samples and deliver them safely to one of our laboratories. The swab samples are analysed at our labs, and the result is communicated back to the individual. We aim to get everyone their test result back within 48 hours of when their swab is taken.

And when they have their result, the individual will have a better understanding of their condition and can discuss with their employer whether they can return to work – helping our country to beat coronavirus.