

COVID Mass Testing – Frequently asked questions

Testing in school

What are the objectives of the Government’s asymptomatic testing strategy in education settings?

As many as one in three people who contract the virus show no symptoms (they are asymptomatic), so could be spreading the disease unknowingly. Asymptomatic testing will help to identify positive cases more quickly and break the chains of transmission. Those who test positive will self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

Alongside asymptomatic testing, secondary schools and colleges continue to put in place a range of protective measures to minimise the risk of infection spread and testing for staff and students will also increase their confidence in the workplace. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of antigen LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested.

All existing protective measures (e.g. social distancing, handwashing, face coverings where needed, bubbles) remain important and the need for these is not lessened. A negative antigen LFD result should not be read as a means to relax or ignore social distancing or other virus prevention measures intended to reduce transmission – antigen LFD is an additional tool that contributes to reducing risk.

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the Government’s current testing policy for those with symptoms. If you have symptoms, you should continue to book a test via <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> or by calling 119 in England.

How effective are these tests?

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect asymptomatic COVID-19 cases. The speed and convenience of the tests supports the detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals, who would not otherwise have got tested. LFD tests are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The tests are highly specific, with low chances of false positives.

They are also very sensitive and able to identify the majority of the most infectious yet asymptomatic individuals. It is important to remember that these tests are an additional layer of health protection measure in addition to hand washing, face covering and social distancing.

What testing is required?

Secondary age students (11+ to 19+) when returning to their school or college, will be offered Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests. This is so students have undertaken some testing in a supervised setting and have had the chance to familiarise themselves with self-swabbing.

Transition to test at home – once students have been tested at school or college, they will be provided with home test kits for regular twice weekly testing at home. Further information to be provided by the Government.

Do I have to test?

Testing is voluntary and individuals will be allowed to attend school or college even if they decide not to take part in testing.

However, we have been asked by the Government to encourage everyone to join in the asymptomatic testing programme to help break transmission links by identifying those that may be carrying the virus unknowingly.

The success of this public health measure depends on as many people participating as possible.

Anyone with symptoms, whether they are involved in this programme or not, should **not** attend school or college and book a free NHS test and follow government self-isolation guidance until the results of their test are known.

What age students should be tested?

Children aged 11 and above attending a secondary school or college should be tested.

Why can't we start test at home and stop using our Asymptomatic Test Sites?

It is important that initially students are supervised whilst swabbing to make sure they are doing it correctly. This is why testing will initially take place at school, as condition of being able to transition students to test at home.

Can students swab themselves?

Yes, in an Asymptomatic Testing Site all pupils 11 and above, can swab themselves if they are able to.

Will the children who have agreed to be tested and those who have not be kept apart?

As a large secondary school, we do not have the capacity to separate children who have/have not agreed to the weekly testing.

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However, we have been asked by the Government to encourage everyone to join in the asymptomatic testing programme to help break transmission links by identifying those that may be carrying the virus unknowingly.

7-day contact testing

Daily contact testing of students and staff who have come into contact with a positive case has been temporarily paused by the Government.

We will **not** complete the daily contact testing of students unless it is reinstated by the Government. If reinstated, we will inform parents/carers to discuss the current level of consent.

Those who have come into contact with positive cases should continue to follow the self-isolation guidance.

Moving to Home testing

When should staff and students do the testing? Mornings vs evening? Is weekend testing allowed?

Staff and students should test twice weekly before coming into school/college, ideally in the morning. If they cannot take the test in the morning, they should take it as soon as possible before coming into school/college.

How will staff and students know what do to with the home test kits?

Detailed information how to self-swab and process the tests is in the Instructions for Use and there is an [NHS video demonstrating how to carry out a](#) test.

When testing at home, students aged 18 and over should self-test and report the result, with assistance if needed. Students aged 12-17 should self-test and report with adult supervision. The adult may conduct the test if necessary. When testing at home children aged 11 (who attend a secondary school) should be tested/swabbed by an adult.

How will test results get recorded when schools and colleges move to home testing?

When testing at home, the school will not automatically find out if staff or students have taken a test. Staff or students (or the parent) are required to report the test result via the NHS Online reporting system for both negative, void and positive test results. They should also report positive, negative and void results to the school/college. If the result is positive, the individual should isolate, and the school/college should help with contact tracing. They will also need to arrange a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the result if the test was done at home.

Those with a negative antigen LFD test result can continue to attend school/college and use protective measures.

What record keeping does the school or college need to do?

Schools and colleges are required to keep a test kit log, where they record which individual has taken which kits home. This is required in the unlikely event of an incident requiring investigation or batch recall. This log will also help record that staff have received the new instructions for use.

Schools and colleges are also encouraged to keep a record of staff and student tests results. This will help with contact tracing, since schools/colleges cannot view staff results otherwise.

The individual is also required to record and share their result (whether positive, negative or void) with NHS Test and Trace.

Why do I need to share information on antigen LFD test results both with NHS Test & Trace and my school?

It is a requirement to share results with NHS Test & Trace so that contact tracing (particularly outside the school environment can take place) and clinical evaluation of the testing programme can continue. Staff and students should share results with their school so that if positive, immediate contact tracing can take place in school.

Void and negative results are useful information for their school both to monitor stocks of kits and to identify any issues that might need escalating to DfE or NHS Test & Trace.

Can my family get tested too?

No, this asymptomatic antigen LFD testing is for staff and students in schools/colleges. The tests will be handed to staff and students for personal use and should not be used for anyone else. If family members experience COVID-19 symptoms, they must follow standard Government guidance, including self-isolating immediately and booking a test through the NHS Coronavirus (COVID 19) service or by calling 119 (England and Wales).

Should someone who has been vaccinated take an antigen LFD test?

Yes, we do not yet know whether vaccines prevent individuals transmitting the virus. If school/college staff have been vaccinated, they should continue to follow the steps set out in the guidance. The vaccine does not interfere with the antigen LFD or PCR tests.

Test process

What happens if a student or staff member's antigen lateral flow test result is positive?

Individuals who return a positive antigen LFD test result must self-isolate immediately in line with NHS Test and Trace guidance. They should also inform their school or college of the positive result and must order a confirmatory PCR test if they are testing at home.

Should I still take part in the asymptomatic testing programme if I have recently tested positive for COVID-19?

If you have tested positive by PCR for COVID-19, you will probably have developed some immunity to the disease. However, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone will develop immunity, or how long it will last. It is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection.

Anyone who has previously received a positive COVID-19 PCR test result should not be re-tested within 90 days of that test, unless they develop any new symptoms of COVID-19.

If, however, you do have an antigen LFD test within 90 days of a previous positive COVID-19 PCR test, for example as part of a workplace or community testing programme, and the result of this test is positive, you and your household should self-isolate and follow the steps in this guidance again.

If it is more than 90 days since you tested positive by PCR for COVID-19, and you have new symptoms of COVID-19, or a positive antigen LFD or PCR test, follow the steps in this guidance again.



Test and Trace

HOW TO DO YOUR TEST

WHILE THIS IS A SELF-SWAB TEST, THERE WILL BE A TESTING HELPER WHO WILL OVERSEE THINGS AND PROVIDE HELP IF YOU NEED

1 YOUR COVID-19 TEST WILL BE SCHEDULED. IF YOU ARE UNDER 16, YOUR PARENT / CARER WILL HAVE CONSENTED

2 YOUR TEST WILL BE FAST AND WHILE IT MIGHT FEEL A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE, IT WON'T HURT YOU

3 BLOW YOUR NOSE IF NEEDED. WASH AND DRY/SANITISE YOUR HANDS. REMOVE THE SWAB BEING CAREFUL NOT TO TOUCH THE SOFT PART

4 OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE AND USE A MIRROR TO LOOK AT THE BACK OF YOUR THROAT, THEN USE THE SWAB TO RUB FIRMLY 4 TIMES ON EACH SIDE

10 SECS

MEDIUM FAST

5 REMOVE THE SWAB CAREFULLY WITHOUT TOUCHING YOUR TEETH, TONGUE OR GUMS

6 GENTLY PLACE IT ABOUT 2-2.5 CM INSIDE ONE OF YOUR NOSTRILS. ROLL THE SWAB 4-5 TIMES ALONG THE LINING OF THE NOSTRIL, THIS WILL TAKE 10-15 SECONDS

7 AFTER THIS, YOU'RE DONE, GENTLY REMOVE THE SWAB BEING CAREFUL NOT TO LET ANYTHING TOUCH THE TIP

8 YOUR SWAB CAN THEN BE PLACED IN A TUBE FOR TESTING, THIS TAKES ABOUT 30 MINUTES

9 YOUR SCHOOL / COLLEGE WILL CONTACT YOU OR YOUR PARENT / CARER WITH THE RESULTS AND LET YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT