

Testing for COVID-19

The HSC is currently providing COVID-19 testing to people who are being admitted to hospital, live in care homes or are essential or key workers.

We would advise caution about obtaining testing from non-governmental sources. A positive or negative test will not be recognised by the HSC and will not change the advice given. You will still have to observe recommended isolation periods.

Please be aware that the HSC is not offering testing to people in the community. If a person calls at your front door offering to test you, do not allow them to enter your home. Close and lock the door. Inform the police.

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Testing for essential or key workers

Coronavirus testing is now available for essential or key workers who are self-isolating due to having coronavirus-like symptoms or because a member of their household has symptoms.

Testing is also available to symptomatic people who live with key or essential workers.

When to get tested

You should get tested in the first 3 days of coronavirus symptoms appearing, although testing is considered effective up until day 5.

No testing should be undertaken after day 5, 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.

You will also have to be able to maintain strict isolation measures during your commute to a testing centre.

Essential or key workers - who is eligible for testing?

Testing is targeted at those essential or key workers who are self-isolating because they are symptomatic, or have household members who are symptomatic, to help enable essential or key workers to return to work as soon as safely possible.

Read more: [guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#).

Essential or key workers who work in essential areas can access testing. This includes workers in:

- Roles necessary for critical national infrastructure to continue to operate (for example postal services, utility, transport sectors, voluntary support staff, financial services, staff providing child care for essential or key workers);
- Roles necessary to support the health and wellbeing of the community directly (for example funeral directors, refuse collectors, medical, energy, utility, transport and food supplies (including retail and supermarkets), food production, agriculture and food sectors, supply pinch points or volunteers delivering food and essential items to vulnerable people).
- Any government department;
- The Health and Safety Executive.

This list is not exhaustive but intended to provide an indication of the type of worker within each group. Please click [here](#) for further guidance.

Please note different procedures are in place for HSC staff and those working in GP/dental surgeries and pharmacies, who will be advised of testing arrangements by their line manager or local Trust.

How to arrange essential or key worker testing

Testing under the UK programme in Northern Ireland is currently conducted in drive-through sites operating at:

- SSE test centre, Odyssey Car park, Belfast BT3 9QQ
- City of Derry Rugby Club test centre, Judges Rd, Derry/ Londonderry, BT47 6LN
- Craigavon MOT centre, Craigavon, BT63 5RY

You will also have to be able to maintain strict isolation measures during your commute to a testing centre.

All centres are open 10am – 4pm, seven days a week. A limited number of home test kits are also available.

An online employer portal has been established to improve the process of booking tests. This portal is experiencing high volumes of demand and access is being carefully regulated to ensure the systems can continue to function effectively.

Eligible employers can register and refer staff for appointments or eligible essential or key workers will be able to book a test directly for themselves or members of their household.

After they have entered their details on the portal, individuals will receive a text or email the same day inviting them to either book an appointment, or offering a home self-testing kit.

Those using self-referral can indicate their preference prior to registering details. The target for sending results is by text within 48 hours.

Obtain a login for the employer referral portal

To get a login, employers of essential or key workers should email portalservicedesk@dhsc.gov.uk

You must supply two email addresses that will primarily be used to load essential or key worker contact details. Once employer details have been verified, two login credentials will be issued for the employer referral portal.

Employers should then login at <https://coronavirus-invite-testing.service.gov.uk/DaraTestDemand/Login> to make referrals.

Self-referral portal

Go to the self-referral portal at: <https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk> to sign up if you are an essential or key worker and you or a member of your family is symptomatic.

Home tests

Essential or key workers who have completed a self-referral may have the option, depending on available capacity, to book a home-test kit.

Home test kits are an option where essential or key workers are unable to attend a drive-through centre. The home test option is covered in the booking process.

How home testing works

After you complete a self-referral and order a home-test kit, the test would then be delivered the next day. You will self-administer the test by taking a swab of the inside of your nose and the back of your throat, using a long cotton bud, then labelling and packing it up as instructed.

A Royal Mail courier will arrive the day after to collect it and take it to the lab. The aim is that results will then be received via email within 48 hours.

Reliability of home testing

Evidence suggests that those with no clinical background or training should be completely able to secure an effective sample.

International peer-reviewed evidence suggests that self-swabbing is just as effective at securing a valid sample as clinician-administered testing.

Each kit comes with comprehensive instructions to guide you through how to administer the swab yourself. Test kits come with further instructions and a short video to take you through the process step by step.

Protection of personal data

Amazon and Royal Mail are the commercial partners who are delivering home testing nationwide. They do not have access to the results or any health data.

Instructions when you visit a test centre

To avoid risk of cross-contamination, our centre is a drive-through. You must arrive by car (not on foot, via public transport, by taxi or by any other means). Only people from your household may be in the car with you.

- Do not exit the car at any point whilst on site.
- Please note, bathroom facilities will not be available.
- When you arrive at the main gate DO NOT lower your windows.
- Once you are on site, we will use the car registration that you have provided in advance or at security to identify you. This is how you gain access to the site.
- Please press your employer-issued staff ID against the window for site security to see.
- You will be directed to a testing lane, where a member of our trained National Testing Team will instruct you to lower your window to carry out a coronavirus test.
- Please note that your test will be self-administered – you will be directed by a member of staff on site.
- You will then be given instructions on how to use your phone to scan your test kit's barcode.

Watch a video explaining the process for drive-through testing:

- [Coronavirus tests for essential or key workers](#)

When you are at the test station please:

- park with your handbrake on;
- turn your engine off;
- turn your radio off;
- have your phone ready for after your test, to scan the barcode of the test kit.

Receiving your results

You will receive your results by email within 72 hours of taking the test. Please ensure you enter the correct contact details when you register.

What happens to the test results

Results under the UK testing programme are communicated to individuals directly by email and are intended to be fed back into public health records in due course.

Negative tests and returning to work

Even if an essential or key worker has had a negative result, it's important to still apply caution. If everyone with symptoms who was tested in their household receive a negative result, the employee can return to work if their work cannot be done from home, providing they are well enough, and have not had a fever for 48 hours.

If, after returning to work, they develop symptoms they should [follow the guidance and self-isolate](#). Employees should discuss their return to work with their employing organisation.

Test results and staying safe

The test will confirm if a person - who is showing symptoms of the virus - actually has it.

It will not confirm whether they have had it and have now recovered.

It is vital those who test negative continue to follow [guidance including precautions related to social distancing and handwashing](#).

The number for the NHS contact centre for results enquiries is: 0300 303 2713

Additionally there is a comprehensive FAQ on Radox's website: www.radoxhealth.com/register-kit-faq

Privacy information

Privacy information on COVID-19 testing can be found [here](#).

Testing for residents and staff of care homes

Information on testing for residents and staff of care homes can be found [here](#).

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