

Covid-19 testing – Frequently asked questions – January 2022

These FAQs are to help people understand the different types of tests for Covid-19 and what has recently changed (at January 2022).

What is the difference between the tests used to find out if I have COVID-19?

PCR testing

PCR testing is routinely used to test for COVID-19 in people **who have symptoms** (new continuous cough, fever, or change/loss of sense of smell or taste), no matter how mild these are.

They are also used for those who have been advised to get a PCR test by the local authority, health professional, public health, school, NHS Test and Trace, or if they are taking part in a government pilot project.

Swabs are sent to a laboratory for analysis and results are sent to your email address or the phone number that you register with. The information is uploaded to the NHS Test and Trace system; the Council do not receive any information.

What should I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, it is important that you book a PCR test as soon as possible. You need to self-isolate from when your symptoms start. This still applies even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

Others living in the same household as you and any close contacts must also self-isolate, unless any one of the following applies:*

- they have had at least 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and it is at least 14 days since their second dose
- they are aged between 5 years and 18 years 6 months
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Anyone aged 5 years and over who **lives in the same household as someone with COVID-19** and who is not legally required to self-isolate is now strongly advised to **take a rapid lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days.**

Anyone aged 5 years and over, **who has been identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19** and who is not legally required to self-isolate, is now strongly advised to **take an LFD test every day for 7 days or up until 10 days since their last contact** with the person who tested positive for COVID-19, if this is sooner.

If any of these LFD tests is positive, they should self-isolate immediately for 10 full days following the date the test was taken.

***Guidance change:** From 17 January, you may be able to end self-isolation early – see 'What should I do if my LFD test is positive?' p.6 below).

***Guidance Change:** From 11 January in England, a **temporary** change to the guidance means that people who receive positive lateral flow device (LFD) test results for COVID-19 will be required to self-isolate immediately and won't be required to take a confirmatory PCR test. This is a temporary measure while COVID-19 rates remain high across the UK. Whilst levels of COVID-19 are high, most people with positive LFD results can be confident that they have COVID-19.

Anyone under 5 years who is a contact is exempt from self-isolation and they do not need to take part in daily contact testing.

In addition to daily LFD testing, household members and close contacts of someone who has COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms should take extra care and:

- limit close contact with other people outside their household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- work from home if they are able to
- if you cannot work from home, speak to your manager. You may have to follow sector specific guidance (such as guidance for health and social care staff).
- wear a face covering in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where they are unable to maintain social distancing
- avoid contact with vulnerable people and anyone with an underlying health condition that puts them at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19

This advice applies while the person in your household with COVID-19 is self-isolating.

If during this time they develop symptoms, no matter how mild, even with a negative LFD result, they must self-isolate and take a PCR test. They must then follow the advice of NHS Test and Trace.

You should not arrange to have a PCR test if you have previously received a positive PCR test result in the last 90 days, unless you develop any new symptoms of COVID-19, as it is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection. Please note the advice to continue with LFD regular testing or daily contact testing below.

It is important to note that some people may experience other non-typical symptoms, often prior to the usual / classic symptoms mentioned above. If you are unwell or displaying symptoms of respiratory infection, no matter how mild, please take additional precautions and book a test or contact your GP or NHS 111.

How do I get a COVID-19 PCR test?

You can order a PCR test kit to be sent to your home or book an appointment at a walk-in or drive-through test site. Tests must be booked in advance.

To book a test, visit <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or call 119 free of charge.

Test sites in Newcastle are located at:

- Great Park
- Westgate Road (former General Hospital site)

- Byker (Shields Road)
- Castle Leazes Car Park (Newcastle University)
- CCE Car Park (Northumbria University)

Occasionally mobile testing units are set up too.

What should I do if my PCR test is positive?

If your test result is positive, by law, you and those in your household who are not exempt* as described above, must self-isolate for 10 days from when your symptoms started or, if you did not have symptoms, from the date of the test.

***Guidance change:** From Monday 17 January, changes to the guidance mean you may be able to end your self-isolation period before the end of the 10 full days. If you live in England and test positive for COVID-19, regardless of your vaccination status, you can leave self-isolation if you:

- take an LFD test from 5 days after the day the symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms) and another LFD test on the following day:
- if both of these results is negative and you do not have a high temperature, you can leave isolation following the second negative LFD result.

To further reduce the chance of passing COVID-19 on to others, you are strongly advised to:

- limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- work from home if you can
- wear a face covering in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces and where you are in close contact with other people
- limit contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19
- follow the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread

If you end your self-isolation following 2 negative LFD test results, from day 5, you should follow this advice until 10 full days from when your self-isolation period started.

If the day 5 or 6 test is positive, you must continue to isolate.

You can take further tests on subsequent days – Day 7, 8 or 9. If two LFD tests taken 24 hours apart on consecutive days are negative, you can leave self-isolation.

If you develop symptoms during isolation, the period of your isolation resets. Day 0 is the date your symptoms start, and you are required to isolate for the next 10 days. You can undertake LFD tests on consecutive days from Day 5 of your new isolation period.

Unvaccinated household contacts are still legally required to self-isolate for 10 days.

The 10-day isolation period starts from the day after the case had symptoms, or if no symptoms, the day after the case's positive test.

You must follow the advice of NHS Test and Trace. For full guidance on self-isolation visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing

LFD testing is for people who **do not have symptoms** of COVID-19 ('asymptomatic'). One in three people who have COVID-19 do not show any symptoms. LFD testing helps us to identify and isolate these people, reducing the spread of COVID-19 to others.

LFD tests give a result in around 30 minutes, without needing to send swabs to a laboratory. It is an important part of helping to reduce disruption to education settings and businesses; identifying COVID-19 cases early helps to reduce transmission and outbreaks and therefore reduce the risk of needing larger numbers of people to self-isolate.

Why should I do LFD testing?

LFDs are an important tool in tackling the spread of COVID-19, along with following the relevant guidance and Covid-secure practice:

- ✓ Wash hands
- ✓ Wear a face covering
- ✓ Make space
- ✓ Let fresh air in
- ✓ Get vaccinated
- ✓ Get tested and isolate

LFD tests are very good at identifying people who have high levels of coronavirus and are most likely to pass on infection to others, even if you do not have symptoms. This is why household members and contacts of someone who has tested positive are strongly advised to take daily LFD tests during the period that they are at highest risk of becoming infected themselves.

Secondary school pupils are encouraged to take twice-weekly LFDs at home and report the results. They may also offer onsite testing at key times in the year such as at the start of term, or for students unable to regularly test at home.

Regular rapid LFD testing for COVID-19 allows us to:

- Identify cases as early as possible and act to reduce community transmission.
- Find more of the people who have COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms – people who are 'asymptomatic'.
- Support them to isolate so they do not unknowingly pass COVID-19 to those they may be in contact with.
- Trace the close contacts of asymptomatic COVID-19 cases and support close contacts to isolate.

The LFD test is a **RED-LIGHT** test that can **STOP** the spread of COVID-19 in people who do not have symptoms by identifying them, isolating them and breaking chains of transmission.

An LFD test is **NOT** a **GREEN LIGHT** test to rule out COVID-19. This is because LFD tests are less sensitive than PCR testing and they will not identify all positive cases of COVID-19. They are a useful tool to identify COVID-19 cases in people who do not show symptoms. They are not a substitute for the measures we all need to take to stop the spread of the virus.

If your LFD test for COVID-19 is negative it is very important that you continue to follow guidance to stop the spread of coronavirus.

If your LFD test is negative, but you go on to develop symptoms, you must get a PCR test as soon as possible and isolate until the results are known. Follow the advice of NHS Test and Trace.

When you leave your home remember to practise 'hands'; 'face'; 'space'. If your workplace requires additional personal protective equipment (PPE) this must be strictly adhered to.

Can I test myself at home?

Yes, you can order or collect home-test kits and then do rapid tests on days when you're more likely to catch or spread COVID-19. For example, do a test before you:

- mix with people in crowded indoor places
- visit someone who is at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19

You should also do daily LFDs (1 a day for 7 days) if you've been in contact with someone with COVID-19 and are exempt from self-isolation.*

You can order or collect home-test kits by:

- Using any unused stocks of LFDs that you have at home
- From school/university if you already obtain test kits from here
- Ordering one pack of seven online at: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>
- Collecting two packs from a collection site – you do not need to book an appointment. Find a centre at <https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>
- Collecting two packs from a pharmacy
- Some community centres, such as a library, may also have tests to pick up.

You must follow the instructions provided in the pack, which are also in multiple languages. You must report your LFD result, no matter what the result is.

Contact 119 if you need support ordering/accessing test kits and for language support if English is not your first language.

Find out more at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/>

What should I do if my LFD test is positive?

If your LFD is positive, you and your household (unless exempt*) will need to self-isolate for 10 days.

***Guidance change:** From Monday 17 January, changes to the guidance mean you may be able to end your self-isolation period before the end of the 10 full days. If you live in England and test positive for COVID-19 on either a PCR or LFD test, regardless of your vaccination status, you can leave self-isolation if you:

- take an LFD test from 5 days after the day the symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms) and another LFD test on the following day:
- if both of these results is negative and you do not have a high temperature, you can leave isolation following the second negative LFD result.

What support is there to help me self-isolate?

Speak to your employer first. Your employer does not want their business and other employees put at risk – and nor do they want you to risk your health. They may have alternative ways of working or can support you financially.

If you are on a low income and cannot work from home, you may qualify for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment. For more information, including who is eligible and how to apply, visit: <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/public-health-wellbeing-and-leisure/public-health-services/coronavirus-COVID-19-6>

If you live in Newcastle, you can also visit Newcastle City Council's welfare and wellbeing page for advice and support about managing self-isolation:

<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/services/public-health-wellbeing-and-leisure/public-health-services/coronavirus-COVID-19/citylife>

Alternatively contact your local authority for further information.

I have received a COVID-19 vaccination – do I still need to take part in regular LFD testing if this is required by my workplace or daily LFD testing if I am a contact?

Yes. The purpose of regular LFD testing is to find COVID-19 cases in people who do not have symptoms so they self-isolate and break the chain of transmission.

Vaccination reduces the likelihood you will become severely ill if you catch COVID-19 and reduces its transmission. However, it does not offer 100% protection from contracting or transmitting COVID-19.

Those who are fully vaccinated can still contract COVID-19 infection.

Vaccination does not cause ‘false positive’ test results – if you test positive for COVID-19 after you have been vaccinated you should assume you have the virus. You and those in your household who are not exempt* must self-isolate for 10 days from when you tested positive.

I tested positive for COVID-19 several weeks ago – should I be taking part in LFD testing?

Yes - if you have previously tested positive for COVID-19 by PCR, even if it is within the last 90 days, you are still strongly advised to take part in to take part in regular asymptomatic testing or daily LFD close contact testing if you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and you are exempt from isolation*.

I have tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies via an antibody test – should I still take part in LFD testing?

Yes – you should still take part. Whilst the presence of COVID-19 antibodies provides some immunity, this may not be long-lasting.

I take part in regular LFD testing. Do I still need a PCR test if I develop COVID-19 symptoms?

Yes – if you develop COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever, change in sense of smell or taste) you must arrange a PCR test as soon as possible and you and those in your household who are not exempt* must self-isolate.

LFD tests are a useful tool to identify COVID-19 in people who do not show any symptoms. They are not a substitute for PCR testing – if you develop symptoms, seek a PCR test.

What do I do if I work in a high-risk setting (such as a prison, hospital, care home) and am already taking daily tests as part of my workplace policy?

If you are already taking daily tests as part of your workplace policy (for example in a higher-risk workplace setting), you should continue to follow the specific guidance from your workplace on the testing and infection control measures you need to take if you are identified as a contact, as these will be different depending on the setting you work in.

Is it compulsory for me to take part in lateral flow testing?

No, taking part in regular LFD testing is required by some workplaces, but is not enforceable by law. Daily contact testing with LFD tests for those exempt from self-isolation* is strongly advised but is not a legal requirement. We would encourage everyone over the age of 11 years to take part, as regular testing is an effective way to identify and isolate people who have COVID-19 without showing symptoms (asymptomatic). This helps to reduce the spread of the virus, break chains of

transmission and move towards greater normality.

I have not been vaccinated and I live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, do I have to self-isolate?

Yes – any unvaccinated adult (18 years and 6 months or over) who lives in the same house as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 must self-isolate. Your isolation period includes the day the first person in your household’s [symptoms](#) started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days. You are not eligible for daily contact testing and must complete the whole 10-day isolation period.

If during your self-isolation you start to develop symptoms, you must book a PCR test immediately. If this is positive, you must start your 10 day count again.

This also applies to anyone who has received only one dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

For more information

www.newcastle.gov.uk/coronavirus

Stay at Home Guidance for households with possible coronavirus:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection who do not live with the person: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person>

*** Close contact ‘self-isolation exemption’:**

If any one of these applies, the close contact of a positive case does not have to self-isolate, unless they go on to develop symptoms, test positive by LFD or PCR:

- They are fully vaccinated and it is at least 14 days since the second dose and contact with the positive case
- They are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- They have taken part in, or are currently part of, an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- They are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

When to use Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs)	When to use PCR Tests
<p>LFD tests are for people who do not show any COVID-19 symptoms. LFD tests are for regular use to check whether we carry the virus without realising or for daily contact testing if you are a contact of someone with symptoms of, or confirmed, COVID-19 infection and are exempt from isolation requirements.*</p>	<p>If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, you must immediately self-isolate, and arrange a free PCR test. These are the tests that are sent to a laboratory to be analysed.</p>
<p>LFD tests are available to pick up at pharmacies and several community locations https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk They can also be ordered online if you are not able to get to a collection point https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/</p>	<p>You can book PCR tests online https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119. You can book an appointment at a walk-in or drive through test site or you can order a PCR test kit to be sent to your home. You can order tests for up to 3 people, for those you live with who have symptoms.</p>
These tests are free	
<p>You do the test yourself and get the result within 30 minutes.</p>	<p>You should get your result within 72 hours. This will be usually be sent by text or email.</p>
<p>One in three people with the virus do not show symptoms, so LFD tests are an important part of stopping the spread of Covid-19.</p>	<p>While waiting for your result, you and anyone you live (unless exempt*) must still self-isolate. Self-isolating is a vital step in preventing the spread of coronavirus.</p>
<p>Negative LFD result A negative result does not remove the need to follow existing COVID-19 measures, in public or at work. So, wear a mask, maintain social distancing, meet outside where possible and let fresh air in when indoors.</p> <p>Positive LFD result If you receive a positive lateral flow test result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you (and anyone you live with, unless exempt*) should self-isolate immediately. This is because you likely carry the virus and can transmit it to other people. Household and close contacts who are exempt are not required to self-isolate (those who are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years 6 months). • you must report a positive rapid lateral flow test result https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result as soon as possible • Temporary changes to guidance from 11 January mean you do not have to take a confirmatory PCR test in most cases. • You may be able to end self-isolation early. If you do a LFD test on two consecutive days from day 5 and these are both negative, you can end isolation after the second negative test. • Household members should conduct daily LFD testing for 7 days, close contacts for 7 days or 10 days from last contact if this is sooner 	<p>Negative PCR result If you receive a negative PCR test result, you and any household members or contacts who were isolating no longer need to continue self-isolating.</p> <p>Positive PCR result If you receive a positive PCR result:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you (and anyone you live with, unless exempt*) should self-isolate immediately for 10 days following the start of your symptoms or the test date if asymptomatic. This is because you are carrying the virus and can transmit it to other people. Household and close contacts who are exempt are not required to self-isolate (those who are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years and 6 months). • You may be able to end self-isolation early. If you do a LFD test on two consecutive days from day 5 and these are both negative, you can end isolation after the second negative test. • Household members and close contacts should conduct daily LFD testing for 7 days for household members and 7 days or 10 days from last contact if a close contact you don't live with if this is sooner • You must follow the advice you're given when you get the result by NHS Test and Trace.

For full guidance on self-isolation visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>