

NHS Test and Trace

How it works guidance:

How test and trace helps fight the virus

The NHS test and trace service will help to control the rate of reproduction (R), reduce the spread of the infection and save lives. By playing your part through the actions set out below, you will directly help to contain the virus by reducing its spread. This means that, thanks to your efforts, we will be able to go as far as it is safe to go in easing lockdown measures.

You can help in the following ways:

- **If you develop symptoms, you must continue to follow the rules to self-isolate with other members of your household and order a test to find out if you have coronavirus**
- **If you test positive for coronavirus, you must share information promptly about your recent contacts through the NHS test and trace service to help us alert other people who may need to self-isolate**
- **If you have had close recent contact with someone who has coronavirus, you must self-isolate if the NHS test and trace service advises you to do so**

What does this mean?

Self-isolation:

- **If you have symptoms'** - you and all household members must remain at home.
- **Do not go outside your home for any reason** i.e. to work, school, or public areas, and do not use public transport or taxis. The [guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection page](#) has more information on self-isolation.

Contact:

Is a person who has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus and who may or may not live with them.

How NHS test and trace service works

Part 1:

For someone with symptoms of coronavirus

1. **Isolate:** as soon as you experience coronavirus symptoms, medical advice is clear: you must self-isolate for at least 7 days. Anyone else in your household must self-isolate for 14 days from when you started having symptoms
2. **Test:** order a test immediately at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access
3. **Results:** if your test is positive, you must complete the remainder of your 7-day self-isolation. Anyone in your household must also complete self-isolation for 14 days from when you started having symptoms. If your test is negative, you and other household members no longer need to self-isolate
4. **Share contacts:** if you test positive for coronavirus, the NHS test and trace service will send you a text or email alert or call you with instructions of how to share details of people with whom you have had close, recent contact and places you have visited. It is important that you respond as soon as possible so that we can give appropriate advice to those who need it. You will be told to do this online via a secure website or you will be called by one of our contract tracers.

Part 2:

If you are contacted by the NHS test and trace service because you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus

1. **Alert:** you will be alerted by the NHS test and trace service if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus. The alert will usually come by text, email or phone call. You should then log on to the NHS test and trace website, which is normally the easiest way for you and the service to communicate with each other – but, if not, a trained call handler will talk you through what you must do. Under-18s will get a phone call and a parent or guardian will be asked to give permission for the call to continue
2. **Isolate:** you will be told to begin self-isolation for 14 days from your last contact with the person who has tested positive. It is important to do this even if you do not feel unwell because, if you have been infected, you could become infectious to others at any point up to 14 days. Your household doesn't need to self-isolate with you, if you do not have symptoms, but they must take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing and handwashing and avoid contact with you at home

3. **Test if needed:** if you develop symptoms of coronavirus, other members of your household must self-isolate immediately at home for 14 days and you must book a test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119 if you have no internet access. If your test is positive, you must continue to stay at home for at least 7 days and we will get in touch to ask about your contacts since they must self-isolate. If your test is negative, you must still complete your 14-day self-isolation period because the virus may not be detectable yet - this is crucial to avoid unknowingly spreading the virus.

People who develop symptoms of coronavirus

How to order a test:

- Please report your symptoms as soon as possible and get a test to find out if you have coronavirus.
- The sooner you have a test, the sooner we can let you know if you and other members of your household must remain in self-isolation.

Members of the public can order a test through the [NHS website](#).

If you are an essential worker or an employer, please visit:

- [essential workers](#)
- [employers](#)
- If you do not have access to the internet, you can order a test by phoning 119.
- [guidance on testing](#) has more information on our testing programme.

It has been made as easy as possible for everyone who has symptoms to access a test quickly, and there are now many potential ways to be tested:

- drive-through regional testing sites
- mobile testing units
- test kits delivered to your home
- hospital-based testing for NHS patients and staff
- dedicated testing centres in other care settings (for example, care homes)

When you order a test, you will get information on the options available to you.

We currently aim to provide results within 48 hours of taking a test, but some results may take longer.

You will get your results by text, email or phone – and the message will advise you about what to do next.

If you test negative:

If you get a negative test result, this means you are at low risk of having coronavirus.

Other members of your household can stop self-isolating. If you feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus, you can stop self-isolating. You could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu – in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until you are better.

If you test positive:

If you get a positive test result, this means that when you took the test, you had coronavirus. **You – and other members of your household – must continue to self-isolate.**

Telling people about your test result:

If you develop symptoms, you may wish to alert the people with whom you have had close contact over the last 48 hours. You should tell them that you might have coronavirus but are waiting for a test result.

At this stage (until the test result is known), those people do not need to self-isolate, but they should take extra care in practising [social distancing](#) and good hygiene, like washing their hands regularly. They should also watch out for their own [symptoms](#).

You may want to write down your recent close contacts now so that you have them to hand if you test positive.

Sharing information about your recent contacts:

If you get a positive test, you will be contacted you and be asked you to share information about any close contacts you had just before or after you developed symptoms. **This is vital if we are to stop the spread of the virus.**

You will contacted by text message, email or phone. If under 18 years old, you will contacted by phone wherever possible and ask your parent or guardian's permission to continue the call.

You will be sent a link to the NHS test and trace website and asked to create a confidential account where you can record details about your recent close contacts. If you do not have internet access or if you do not complete the online process, one of our contact tracers will phone you to gather this information from you.

The information you give will be handled in strict confidence and will only be kept and used in line with data protection laws. It will help us to contact people who are at risk of having been exposed to coronavirus and explain what they must do to help prevent the further spread of the virus.

When we contact people to advise them to self-isolate, we do not tell them your identity. But if you have alerted them when you first develop symptoms or when you get your test result, they will be better prepared for the advice we give them.

If you are contacted:

If the NHS test and trace service contacts you, the service will use text messages, email or phone.

All texts or emails will ask you to sign into the [NHS test and trace contact-tracing website](#).

If NHS test and trace calls you by phone, the service will be using a single phone number: **0300 013 5000**.

Contact tracers will:

- Call you from **0300 013 5000**
- Send you text messages from 'NHS'

- Ask you to sign into the [NHS test and trace contact-tracing website](#)
- Ask for your full name and date of birth to confirm your identity, and postcode to offer support while self-isolating
- Ask about the coronavirus symptoms you have been experiencing
- Ask you to provide the name, telephone number and/or email address of anyone you have had close contact with in the 2 days prior to your symptoms starting
- Ask if anyone you have been in contact with is under 18 or lives outside of England

Contact tracers will **never:**

- Ask you to dial a premium rate number to speak to us (for example, those starting 09 or 087)
- Ask you to make any form of payment or purchase a product or any kind
- Ask for any details about your bank account
- Ask for your social media identities or login details, or those of your contacts
- Ask you for any passwords or PINs, or ask you to set up any passwords or PINs over the phone
- Disclose any of your personal or medical information to your contacts
- Provide medical advice on the treatment of any potential coronavirus symptoms
- Ask you to download any software to your PC or ask you to hand over control of your PC, smartphone or tablet to anyone else
- Ask you to access any website that does not belong to the government or NHS

What you will be asked:

- If you have family members or other household members living with you. In line with the medical advice they must remain in self-isolation for the rest of the 14-day period from when your symptoms began
- If you have had any close contact with anyone other than members of your household. We are interested in in the 48 hours before you developed symptoms and the time since you developed symptoms. Close contact means:
 - having face-to-face contact with someone (less than 1 metre away)

- spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of someone travelling in a car or other small vehicle with someone (even on a short journey) or close to them on a plane
- if you work in – or have recently visited – a setting with other people (for example, a GP surgery, a school or a workplace)

You will be asked to provide, where possible, the names and contact details (for example, email address, telephone number) for the people you have had close contact with. As with your own details these will be held in strict confidence and will be kept and used only in line with data protection laws.

How this information is used:

Based on the information you provide, we will assess whether we need to alert your contacts and ask them to self-isolate.

A referral may be made to local public health experts if your case is complex, for example, if you work in or have recently visited:

- a health or care setting, such as a hospital or care home
- a prison or other secure setting
- a school for people with special needs
- critical national infrastructure or areas vital for national security

Local public health experts are Public Health England staff and teams employed by your local authority who work together with all parts of the local community to prevent or respond to local outbreaks.

The link to the Gov.Uk Website is:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>