9 in 10 pharmacies now offering free, rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) tests

- Regular, rapid testing can detect COVID-19 in 30 minutes, helping break the chains of transmission
- Pharmacy Collect service provides an additional route to twice-weekly, rapid testing for everyone without symptoms

Nine in ten pharmacies across England are now distributing free rapid lateral flow tests for people to collect and use at home.

Rapid, regular testing is now available to everyone in England and the new 'Pharmacy Collect' service provides an additional route to regular testing, making it as easy as possible for people without COVID-19 symptoms to access testing twice a week.

The Pharmacy Collect service is available to people aged over 18 without symptoms, who are able to visit a participating local pharmacy and collect a box of 7 rapid tests to use twice a week at home.

Alongside the rollout of the vaccine, testing will form a crucial part of everyday life as parts of society reopen. Around 1 in 3 people with coronavirus don't have symptoms, which means they can spread the virus without knowing it. Regular testing continues to play a critical role in stopping the spread of the virus and breaking the chains of transmission.

An online checker has launched so people can find their nearest pharmacy offering free rapid test kits.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

> Pharmacies make an invaluable contribution our health service – they have gone above and beyond in response to COVID-19 to serve their communities. Now, they will play a key role in our rapid testing programme, which is a vital tool in reopening society in the months ahead.
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> I have been delighted at the level of interest and how fast the response has been from pharmacies to take part, with 9 in 10 registering to offer rapid test kits within 10 days.
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> This new service will make it even easier for people to access rapid testing twice a week. The testing only takes 30 minutes and will help people stop the spread of the virus – protecting families and communities and saving lives.

New analysis by NHS Test and Trace shows lateral flow (LFD) tests to have a specificity of at least 99.9%. This means that for every 1,000 lateral flow

tests carried out, there is fewer than one false positive result. All positive results from LFD tests must be followed up with a confirmatory PCR test within 72 hours. Confirmatory PCR testing will also mean variants of concern are detected more quickly.

If testing at home, individuals will need to register their results online or by calling 119, even if they get a negative result. They should self-isolate if they get a positive result and order a confirmatory PCR test online or by calling 119.

The test kits will be provided free of charge to anyone requesting them with one box of test kits per person.

All pharmacies that sign up to deliver the service will receive a set-up fee and a transaction fee every time a member of the public collects a kit.

Each box contains 7 LFDs. This allows the person to test themselves twice weekly within a 3-week timeframe. This number of tests in the box factors in the potential for a void test.

The majority of pharmacies have test kits available but we are aware that some pharmacies are unable to immediately order test kits. Stock is being replenished to wholesalers on a daily basis with deliveries being made to pharmacies within a matter of days in order to meet demand.

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 – a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – should book a PCR test online or by calling 119.

Getting a rapid test is quick and convenient. Rapid tests are available through:

- a home ordering service, which allows people to order lateral flow tests online to be delivered to their home
- workplace testing programmes, on-site or at home
- community testing, offered by all local authorities
- collection at a local PCR test site during specific test collection time windows
- testing on site at schools and colleges