

# Business as usual for NHS Test and Trace over Christmas

Across the country, NHS Test and Trace staff will be working hard to continue the nation's fight against coronavirus.

More than 700 testing sites are now open across the country, meaning that the average distance to travel to a test site is just 2.4 miles.

All test sites will remain open, with reduced opening hours and booking slots available only on bank holidays when demand is expected to be lower. NHS Test and Trace contact tracers will also continue to work throughout the festive period with amended opening hours, to ensure there are no delays in contacting close contacts of positive cases and breaking chains of transmissions.

PCR swab testing is available for those with coronavirus symptoms: a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste. Anyone with one or more of these symptoms should book a test at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

We continue to work night and day to ensure testing is accessible across the country. This vital work will not stop for Christmas, with minimal disruption to our services.

NHS Test and Trace can help contain the spread of coronavirus, but I urge everyone to celebrate responsibly and remember hands, face, space throughout the festive season.

Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection Baroness Dido Harding said:

We are committed to keeping the country safe and saving lives by identifying, containing and controlling the coronavirus.

NHS Test and Trace will remain open and ready to support the nation while they celebrate during the festive period. Whilst we know people will do their best to be careful whilst celebrating, we are there with tests available for anyone with coronavirus symptoms over this period, offering peace of mind during this special time of year.

NHS Test and Trace is one of the largest contact tracing and testing systems anywhere in the world and we are very grateful for all the staff who will be sacrificing time with their loved ones to

make sure it is there for those who need it every day of the year.

You can only get a free NHS test if at least one of the following applies:

- you have a high temperature
- you have a new, continuous cough
- you've lost your sense of smell or taste or it's changed
- you've been asked to by a local council
- you're taking part in a government pilot project

You can also get a test for someone you live with if they have symptoms.

### **Reduced opening hours for testing sites**

| <b>Date</b>                              | <b>Local testing sites</b> | <b>Drive-through testing sites</b> | <b>Mobile testing units</b> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 24 December                              | 8am to 8pm                 | 8am to 5pm                         | 10am to 4pm                 |
| 25 December (Christmas Day)              | 9am to 3pm                 | 9am to 3pm                         | 10am to 4pm                 |
| 28 December (Boxing Day)                 | 9am to 3pm                 | 9am to 3pm                         | 10am to 3pm                 |
| 31 December                              | 8am to 8pm                 | 8am to 5pm                         | 10am to 4pm                 |
| 1 January (New Year's Day)               | 9am to 3pm                 | 9am to 3pm                         | 10am to 4pm                 |
| 4 January (bank holiday – Scotland only) | 9am to 3pm                 | 9am to 3pm                         | 10am to 4pm                 |

Home testing is also available and will only operate a reduced service on bank holidays. People using home test kits will be given specific guidance about how to return their kits during the festive period as some tests will need to be posted by midday on Christmas Eve, 28 December and 31 December and there will be no collections on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. This is to match the Royal Mail's collection times.

Satellite testing, primarily used for deliveries to care homes, is also available every day with a courier service used to ensure samples are collected and tested on bank holidays.

### **Amended opening hours for contact tracing**

| <b>Date</b>                 | <b>Tier 2 / 3 tracing</b> | <b>119</b>  |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| 23 December                 | 8am to 8pm                | 7am to 11pm |
| 24 December                 | 8am to 5pm                | 7am to 5pm  |
| 25 December (Christmas Day) | 10am to 4pm               | 7am to 5pm  |
| 26 December                 | 8am to 8pm                | 7am to 11pm |
| 27 December                 | 8am to 8pm                | 7am to 11pm |
| 28 December (Boxing Day)    | 10am to 6pm               | 7am to 11pm |
| 29 December                 | 8am to 8pm                | 7am to 11pm |
| 30 December                 | 8am to 8pm                | 7am to 11pm |

| <b>Date</b>                | <b>Tier 2 / 3 tracing</b> | <b>119</b>  |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| 31 December                | 8am to 5pm                | 7am to 5pm  |
| 1 January (New Year's Day) | 10am to 6pm               | 7am to 5pm  |
| 2 January                  | 8am to 8pm                | 7am to 11pm |
| 3 January                  | 8am to 8pm                | 7am to 11pm |

The NHS Test and Trace laboratory network will also be processing samples as normal with the same level of capacity, including on bank holidays, to ensure continuity of service.

The government is doing everything it can to keep people safe this festive season. There are different rules on meeting friends and family, depending on when you meet them. From 2 December to 23 December, you must follow the guidance for the tier in your area. From 23 December to 27 December, you may choose to form a Christmas bubble. More details can be found in the [guidance for the Christmas period](#).

Northern Ireland and the Isle of Wight will have a different timetable, which they will communicate separately.

This year there will be 3 bank holidays over the Christmas and New Year period, with a fourth in Scotland:

- 25 December
- 28 December
- 1 January
- 4 January (Scotland only)