

Changes to COVID-19 testing in England from 1 April

Symptomatic testing

Symptomatic testing in high-risk settings, where infection can spread rapidly among people who may be at higher risk of serious illness, remains important to ensure that COVID-19 is detected as quickly as possible.

This is to help minimise the number and impact of outbreaks to protect those who are most vulnerable.

Free tests for people who have COVID-19 symptoms will continue to be provided to the following groups, largely via the existing channels:

- NHS patients in hospital, who will be tested via the established NHS testing programme
- those eligible for COVID-19 antiviral and other treatments, who will be sent a pack of tests and can request replacements if they need them
- NHS staff and staff working in NHS-funded independent healthcare provision – the current lateral flow test ordering portal will remain available for this group to order their own tests
- adult social care staff in care homes, homecare organisations, extra care and supported living settings and adult day care centres, as well as residents in care homes and extra care and supported living settings via the established organisation ordering portal
- adult social care social workers, personal assistants, Shared Lives carers and CQC inspectors will be able to order tests from the current online lateral flow ordering system
- staff and patients in hospices will be supplied tests by the hospice
- staff and detainees in prisons and other places of detention will be supplied tests by the detention premises as currently happens
- staff and detainees in immigration removal centres will be supplied tests, as currently happens, by the organisation concerned
- staff and users of high-risk domestic abuse refuges and homelessness settings

Asymptomatic testing

During periods of high prevalence, asymptomatic testing will continue to mitigate risk. Testing will continue to be provided for:

- adult social care staff and a small number of visitors providing personal care
- hospice staff
- patient-facing staff in the NHS and NHS-funded independent healthcare provision
- some staff in prisons and other places of detention, and some refuges

and shelters

Care home outbreak testing for all staff and residents will also continue all year.

Full guidance will be published shortly setting out how the current testing regimes will change to reflect the [Living with COVID-19 strategy](#), which will include specific guidance for high-risk settings.

Visitors to high-risk settings

Most visitors to adult social care settings, the NHS, hospices, prisons or places of detention will no longer require a test.

Tests will continue to be provided to a small number of visitors to care homes and hospices who will be providing personal care.

Visits by people with symptoms may still be allowed in exceptional circumstances, such as end of life visits. Please contact someone responsible at the setting prior to visiting in these circumstances.

If you wish to test yourself, lateral flow tests will continue to be available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, including online.

It is vital that everyone continues to follow the [simple steps to keep themselves and others safe](#).

Changes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

The devolved governments have set out their own plans:

The government will continue to work together with our partners to keep all of these measures under review.

If you do not fall into the categories listed here but you wish to test yourself for COVID-19, lateral flow tests will continue to be available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, including online.