

# Free rapid tests for all businesses for regular workplace testing

- Workplace testing now available to all businesses, including those with fewer than 50 employees
- Business encouraged to register interest by 31 March to access free workplace testing
- Regular testing will be a vital part of the government's roadmap to cautiously ease restrictions

As part of the government's roadmap to cautiously lift restrictions, businesses of all sizes, including those with fewer than 50 employees, can register from today to order free lateral flow tests for their employees.

Around 1 in 3 people with coronavirus don't have symptoms, which means they could be spreading the virus in workplaces without knowing. Rapid testing detects cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning positive cases can isolate immediately, breaking chains of transmission.

Regular testing could be the difference between a workplace being able to stay open and operational, or needing to close due to a COVID-19 outbreak. It will form a crucial part of the government's plan to gradually and safely ease restrictions as we get back to a more normal life.

So far over 3,500 businesses are signed up to offer workplace testing programmes, and over 14,000 have registered their interest in offering rapid testing, with many already rolling tests out.

Businesses have until 31 March to register for the government's workplace testing scheme, which will remain free until the end of June. All those who can work from home should continue to do so.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Regular workplace testing is a vital part of our route back to normal life, which is why I'm very pleased that we're now expanding our offer of free workplace testing to businesses of all sizes, including SMEs.

These rapid tests will allow positive cases of Covid-19 to be caught quickly, which is crucial in helping businesses protect their workplaces and employees as we cautiously lift restrictions.

I urge all businesses to register their interest in the programme before 31 March to help break chains of transmission and keep people safe.

Dr Susan Hopkins, COVID-19 Strategic Response Director to PHE and Chief

Medical Adviser to NHS Test and Trace:

Around one in three people who have coronavirus never show any symptoms but may still be infectious. This means they could be spreading the virus without realising it.

Rapid testing can help detect asymptomatic cases quickly, preventing the virus from entering workplaces and stopping outbreaks before they occur.

Combined with other protective measures, rapid testing is a vital tool to help us lower infection rates and ensure that they stay low. If you're offered a test, please do take it.

Federation of Small Business Chairman Mike Cherry said:

A workplace testing infrastructure that works for businesses of all sizes as well as consumers is fundamental to bringing the coronavirus under control and ensuring that this current lockdown is the last. It's great to see that the smallest businesses can now apply to set-up testing facilities on their premises.

It's vital that they are given all the support they need to do so successfully as they focus on staying afloat in extremely changing circumstances. We'd encourage all small firms that would benefit from a testing facility to apply as swiftly as they can.

Confederation of British Industry Chief UK Policy Director Matthew Fell, said:

Enabling more companies to engage with workplace testing is good news. It will help protect workers and help stifle Covid transmission. Businesses appreciate that regular mass testing can play a vital role in a safe re-opening, helping to build staff confidence and adding a layer of resilience to help firms stay open.

The CBI will continue to work with our members and with government to ensure firms have the knowledge and support they need to engage with testing opportunities. Increasing take-up will be vital if we are to meet the timetable set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap and safely loosen restrictions for summer.

Alongside the roll out of the vaccination programme and following the 'Hands, Face, Space', regular testing is a vital tool to stop transmission as sections of society are reopened.

The expansion of asymptomatic testing is already well underway in larger

companies for those who need to leave home for work. Both private and public sector employers have signed up to provide rapid testing at asymptomatic testing sites, along with a self-test option for those that cannot access a workplace testing site. This includes the UK's largest employer – the NHS, those working in adult social care, education staff and a wide range of other sectors.

An [online portal](#) has been launched for businesses to find out more about offering rapid workplace testing. Businesses will be provided with all the information they need to plan and deliver their testing programme, along with promotional materials.

All local authorities in England are now offering rapid lateral flow testing for small businesses if they can't offer rapid workplace testing. Businesses can find their local test site [online](#).

#### Case study

Odyssey Systems is based in Stockton-on-Tees and has a staff of 28. Although this is a relatively small company, it carries out business critical services across the North East and Yorkshire.

Andrew Middlemiss, Finance Director at Odyssey Systems said: > Our staff work remotely whenever possible, but several roles require a presence in the office or, in the case of installing equipment or delivering remote working solutions, our engineers must attend a client's premises. > > The lateral flow tests offer peace of mind to employees and engineers required to visit clients' premises, and being able to access these tests for free will make a huge difference to our business >