

# Health Secretary calls on country to get tested as access is expanded even further

- Access to coronavirus testing increased further with six new 'walk through' local testing sites in England offering appointments to people without cars
- The number of mobile testing units will double to 236 by the end of July and new priority postboxes for testing kits created
- Health Secretary calls on everyone across the country with symptoms to get their free test, and help stop the spread of the virus

Coronavirus testing has been made even easier and more accessible, the Health Secretary announced today.

Six new 'walk through' local testing sites are now offering appointments to people in England, with the capacity to test hundreds of people each day and are all easily accessible by foot or on a bike.

Three months since the first regional drive through test site was set up in Nottingham, there are now 68 such sites across the country, alongside 6 new walk-through sites in England, new mobile testing units, and special home test postboxes for safe and easy returns.

Free and accessible testing is a cornerstone of the new NHS Test and Trace service, which is working to stop the spread of coronavirus in local communities and to support the lifting of restrictions so people can see more of their friends and family, help businesses get back on their feet and get people back in jobs. The NHS Test and Trace service has identified 113,925 people as recent close contacts since the service began on 28 May 2020.

The new walk-through sites will bring testing to the heart of communities, by focusing on offering appointments to people without cars who can safely travel on foot, without coming into contact with others. These sites will continue to be expanded where there is demand from local communities and will provide a convenient option, close to where people live and work.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It has never been easier to get a free coronavirus test, and our new walk-in centres are yet another way to get one.

If you have symptoms, however mild, please get tested now to help stop the spread of the virus and protect the people around you.

The biggest network of diagnostic testing in UK history is ready and able to offer a test to anyone, anywhere in the country. In England, NHS Test and Trace is there to help those testing positive

to trace their recent contacts and advise those at risk to stay at home, ultimately saving lives.

It is encouraging to see transmission of the virus is going down, but we all still have a part to play to limit this further. Getting tested as soon as you develop symptoms is an essential step to protect the most vulnerable and help us to safely ease lockdown measures.

Home testing kits can now be returned without booking a courier service, allowing those choosing this testing option to post their testing kits at any of the 30,000 Royal Mail priority postboxes across the UK, which will all be marked by a regionalised NHS logo by 3 July.

In addition to this, 30 additional mobile testing units are now travelling the UK, responding to increased regional demand for testing, and supporting hard to reach areas. Mobile testing enables temporary testing sites to be set up quickly to serve communities on a rolling basis and target specific demand. This brings the total of mobile units to 147, currently staffed by military personnel in England, Scotland and Wales and by civilian staff in Northern Ireland. This number will further increase to 236 across the United Kingdom by the end of July.

Specialised translation services will soon be offered across a range of 68 drive-through testing sites, to support people who don't speak English as their first language such as Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, Mandarin, Polish, and British Sign Language for people with hearing difficulties.

The expansion of testing announced today supports the existing NHS or Public Health England (PHE) infrastructure, which has more than doubled its testing capacity since the coronavirus pandemic began, and supports our commitment to expand local direction of national testing resources and move to a more locally owned and delivered testing model.

The Lighthouse labs were created at the same time existing NHS England or PHE lab capacity was expanded, which allowed NHS capacity to be reserved to test patients and NHS staff while testing eligibility was broadened out through the lighthouse labs. This has meant we have always had the ability to test patients and were able to widen tests to staff, key workers and eventually everyone.

Across the UK testing capacity has been expanded to more than 200,000 tests a day, meaning that anyone with symptoms can immediately book a test for free. Local authorities in England will have greater autonomy to deliver different types of testing models which are suited to the needs of their population and local communities.

Anyone with symptoms of coronavirus – a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – should book a test immediately.

In England, anyone testing positive will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace,

to help them trace their recent contacts and further control the spread of the virus.

NHS Test and Trace is central to the government's coronavirus recovery strategy. To stop the spread of the virus, everyone will need to play their part by isolating if symptomatic, booking a test as soon as possible, and if asked to do so, identifying their close contacts. This is the best way to enable life to return to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, in a way that is safe and protects our NHS and social care.

Everyone with symptoms can book or order a free test at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://nhs.uk/coronavirus) or by calling 119. Essential workers and members of their households can [access priority testing on GOV.UK](#).

The government has put in place the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities in British history spanning the whole of the UK, including 68 drive-through sites, 147 mobile testing units, home testing and satellite kits and 3 mega laboratories.

We have already carried out more than 8.5 million coronavirus tests since the pandemic began. The majority of tests at regional testing centres and mobile testing units are returned within 24 hours, with 90% returned within 48 hours.

In addition to the 68 drive-through regional testing sites across the UK, there are now 6 walk-through local testing sites in Newcastle, Rochdale, Leeds, Brent, Newham and Slough offering appointments to people without cars, and with Slough being the first hybrid drive and walk-through site.

See more information on [visiting a local test site](#)

147 mobile testing units are now travelling the UK, with the total number reaching 236 by the end of July. The mobile units can be requested by local councils in England in response to increased local demand, to protect against regional transmission of the virus, and offer both drive and walk through services. The devolved administrations manage the tasking of their mobile testing units.

A home test user can [check where their nearest priority postbox is](#). A process of marking all priority postboxes with stickers has also begun across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Anyone who receives a home testing kit will also receive instructions about how to return the kit safely, including wiping down the box with an antiseptic wipe, following social distancing guidelines and wearing a mask when posting the kit.

Anyone who is shielding, vulnerable or too unwell to leave the home can still use the courier service or call the customer contact centre for further help.