Mandatory COVID-19 testing introduced to bolster border measures

- all international arrivals to England, including UK nationals, required to present a negative COVID-19 test taken up to 72 hours prior to departure
- passengers will be subject to an immediate fine of £500 if they fail to comply with the new regulations on pre-departure testing
- all passengers arriving from countries not on the government's travel corridor list will still be required to self-isolate for 10 days, regardless of test result
- passengers will still be required to fill in a passenger locator form and be subject to national lockdown restrictions

Passengers arriving from all international destinations will be [required to present a negative COVID-19 test result before departing for England](#) to help protect against new strains of coronavirus circulating internationally.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has announced that from next week inbound passengers arriving by boat, plane or train will have to take a test up to 72 hours before departing the country they are in, to help protect against the new strains of coronavirus such as those seen in Denmark and South Africa.

Today's (8 January 2021) decisive action is in response to the changes seen in the transmission of the virus both domestically and across the globe. Pre-departure testing will protect travel and will provide an additional layer of safety from imported cases of coronavirus on top of the mandatory 10 day self-isolation for arrivals, helping identify people who may currently be infectious and preventing them from travelling to England.

A negative pre-departure test reduces the risk of someone travelling whilst infectious, acting as another safeguard to prevent imported infections. Passengers arriving from countries not on the government's [travel corridor list](#) must self-isolate for 10 days regardless of their pre-departure test result to provide further robust protection from those travelling from high-risk countries.

Prior to departure passengers will need to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test result to carriers, as well as their [passenger locator form](#). The UK Border Force will conduct spot checks on arrival into England to ensure that passengers are fully compliant.

The move further bolsters existing protective measures which helped to safely enable international travel last year, with self-isolation for new arrivals and travel corridors remaining critical in reducing the risk of imported cases from high-risk countries.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps said:

We already have significant measures in place to prevent imported cases of COVID-19, but with new strains of the virus developing internationally we must take further precautions.

Taken together with the existing mandatory self-isolation period for passengers returning from high-risk countries, pre-departure tests will provide a further line of defence — helping us control the virus as we roll out the vaccine at pace over the coming weeks.

[National lockdown restrictions](#) which came into force on 6 January 2021 remain in place meaning everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons, including for work.

Permitted travellers will need to take their test up to 72 hours before departure, and this will apply irrespective of whether a country is on the travel corridor list. The government will set out the standards that these tests will need to meet and what proof passengers will need to present.

Passengers arriving into England who have successfully demonstrated a negative result prior to departure from a country not on the travel corridor list will still have the option to reduce the self-isolation period from 10 to as little as 5 days by paying for a test through the [Test to Release scheme](#). The scheme requires a test to be taken on or after the fifth full day since leaving a country not on the travel corridor list.

Passengers will be required to show their negative test result before boarding, and transport operators will deny boarding if necessary. On arrival back into the UK, Border Force will check passengers test results through the current spot check regime, to ensure that individuals are compliant with the new rules, and passengers will be subject to an immediate fine of £500.

There will be a limited number of exemptions, including for hauliers, children under 11, crews and for those who travelling from countries without the infrastructure available to deliver the tests. Further exemptions will be set out on GOV.UK.

This follows the [recent decision to temporarily suspend direct travel from South Africa to England](#) after new evidence emerged from health authorities reporting an outbreak of a variant strain of coronavirus spreading to some local communities.

Those who travel indirectly from South Africa must self-isolate for 10 days.

All travellers will still be required to complete a passenger locator form before arrival into England. This is critical in being able to track the virus in case of any local outbreaks, and those who fail to complete a passenger locator form will be subject to an increased fine of £500.