

FAQ – Health and Social Care Staff Testing for COVID-19

Testing for staff who have possible symptoms of COVID-19

This FAQ addresses testing for staff with symptoms of COVID-19.

Some groups of staff without symptoms are offered testing either routinely (e.g. weekly staff testing in certain settings) or under the direction of an incident management team (IMT). Those forms of testing are not addressed here.

Further information about testing is available at <https://www.nhsgrampian.org/covid-19/information-for-nhs-grampian-staff/subpages/covid-19-testing/staff-covid-19-testing/>

Can I be tested?

You can request testing from NHS Grampian if:

- you have any possible symptom(s) of COVID-19, no matter how mild
- AND you work in health or social care

All health and social care staff who have any possible symptom of COVID-19, no matter how mild, should self-isolate and seek testing before returning to work.

Please follow the link below for guidance on household isolation:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/test-and-protect/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-infection>

What are the possible symptoms of COVID-19?

Possible symptoms of COVID-19 include fever ($\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$), chills, dry or productive cough, sore throat, headache, runny nose, shortness of breath, general weakness, muscle pain, diarrhoea, or loss of taste/smell.

Please note it's quite common to develop a fever after a vaccination, which normally happens within 48 hours of vaccination and usually goes away within 48 hours. If that happens to you after your COVID-19 vaccine you do not need to self-isolate or book a test unless you have other COVID-19 symptoms or have been told by Test and Protect that you are a close contact, you live with someone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19 or you live with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19

Who counts as working in health or social care?

Anyone who works for NHS Grampian, Health and Social Care Partnerships, NHS24, NHS National Services for Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service, community pharmacies, community optometrists, dental services, all and any social care provider, all and any care home, and any unpaid carer or NHS or social care volunteer.

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I'm not ill, but someone in my household is ill – can they be tested?

If someone in your household has any of the three “classic” symptoms of fever ($\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$), new continuous cough, or a loss of taste or smell, then you need to enter household isolation for 10 days.

They can request testing from NHS Grampian if:

- They have any of the “classic” symptoms of COVID-19
- AND you work in health or social care

Why are staff tested for the larger list of possible symptoms, but household members only tested for the three classic symptoms?

The main reason for using the larger list of symptoms for health and social care staff is to reduce the risk of staff with atypical symptoms of COVID-19 unintentionally bringing it in to work. These wider symptoms may be less likely to be caused by COVID-19 but the potential inconvenience is felt to be outweighed by the protection offered to patients, residents and clients. This balance of risk will be less for household members, and so they are being asked to follow the guidance for the general population.

I don't work in health or social care – can I be tested?

Anyone with symptoms can access testing via the UK Government testing programme.

<https://self-referral.test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/>

Should I stay off work if I've been tested?

Anyone working in health and social care who has any possible symptom(s) of COVID-19, no matter how mild, must not go to work.

Stay in self-isolation for 10 days, and everyone in your household in household-isolation also for 10 days, until you are told you have a negative test result. If you were tested because you had symptoms, and you received a negative result, you should only consider returning to work when you are feeling better, and you must have been free of fever or diarrhoea for at least 48 hours.

How do I get tested?

Complete the short form available online - <https://www.nhsgrampian.org/covid-19/information-for-nhs-grampian-staff/subpages/covid-19-testing/staff-covid-19-testing/>

You will then be contacted by telephone with details of your test appointment. Please ensure the mobile number you provide is correct and keep your phone near you. The incoming call will display as 'No caller ID'.

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How long will it take after I have submitted my form?

We aim to contact you the same day or the next day.

We aim to book you in for a test the same day or the next day.

Ideally you should be tested within three days of your symptoms starting. We will test you up to five days after your symptoms started.

How long does it take to get my results?

We aim to tell you your results within 24 hours of your sample being taken. Sometimes it can take 48 to 72 hours depending upon how busy the laboratory is.

What do my results mean?

“Not detected” means that genetic material from the SARS-CoV-2 virus was not detected in the sample which was taken from your throat and nose. This is often referred to as having a “negative result”.

“Detected” means that genetic material from the SARS-CoV-2 virus was detected in the sample which was taken from your throat and nose. This is often referred to as having a “positive result”.

How do I get my results?

The person who was tested will be informed of their result by telephone or text message. If the test result is “Detected” (positive) you will have the opportunity to start providing names and telephone numbers for those you will have had contact with whilst infectious.

This will be followed by a call from a Contact Tracer who will provide advice and support as well as to follow up with regards to your possible ‘contacts’.

What does the test involve?

A member of the staff testing team will ask you to open your mouth and will gently swab the back of your throat, before then gently putting the same swab up your nostril and swabbing the inside of your nose. (The swab looks like a large cotton bud.)

If you attend a drive-through facility you will be swabbed while remaining in your vehicle. If you are swabbed at home, you will be swabbed while sitting in your home.

The swab will be analysed to see if it contains genetic material from the virus that causes COVID-19.

Where is testing carried out?

NHS Grampian has three drive-through facilities:

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- Foresterhill Lea, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (walk-through facility available at this site)
- Jubilee Hospital, Huntly
- By Linkwood Medical Practice, Elgin

For those unable to attend a drive-through facility, testing will be offered at home.

When testing is organised by an incident management team in response to a cluster or an outbreak (e.g. in a care home) the testing team may arrange a pop-up testing facility close to the affected setting to make it easier for staff to be tested.

What happens if my test result is Not Detected (negative)?

If your COVID-19 test result is negative, then something else has caused your illness. You no longer need to self-isolate for 10 days but should remain aware that you may have a different infectious illness which you could pass on to others.

You **must** contact your manager BEFORE you return to your workplace.

You should only consider returning to work when you are feeling better, and you must have been free of fever or diarrhea for at least 48 hours.

What if my household member test result is Not Detected (negative)?

If your household member COVID-19 test result is negative, then something else has caused their illness. The household does not need to complete 10 days household isolation. As long as you remain well you can let your manager know that you can return to work.

You **must** contact your manager BEFORE you return to your workplace.

If someone else in your household develops symptoms, then you need to repeat the isolation instructions. The new household member can now be tested.

My household member was negative but now I have symptoms, what do I do?

If you have possible symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild, you must now enter 10 days self-isolation and your household must also enter a new period of 10 days household isolation. You can now be tested because you have symptoms. Put in a new testing request to obtain an appointment.

What happens if my test result is Detected (positive)?

If your COVID-19 test result is positive, then it means that the virus that causes COVID-19 infection has been found in your throat or nose. You and your household must complete the 10 days self-isolation. You will receive your result by text or telephone call. You will then be called by a Test and Protect Contact Tracer who will provide advice and support and you will also be asked about possible close contacts. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/>

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NHS Inform provides helpful advice about managing symptoms of COVID-19.
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-coronavirus-covid-19>

You will be able to return to work from the eleventh day after your symptoms started as long as you have had no fever for 48 hours and you feel well enough to do so. You **must** contact your manager BEFORE you return to your workplace.

Your line manager must remotely complete a return to work risk assessment with you before you return to the workplace.

<https://www.nhsgrampian.org/siteassets/sp/spcovid/return-to-work-form.doc>

What if my household member test result is Detected (positive)?

If your household member COVID-19 test result is positive, then it means that the virus that causes COVID-19 infection has been found in their throat or nose. They must complete the 10 days self-isolation. You and your household must also complete the 10 days household-isolation.

They will receive the result by text or telephone call. They will then be called by a Test and Protect Contact Tracer who will provide advice and support and you will also be asked about possible close contacts.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/>

NHS Inform provides helpful advice about managing symptoms of COVID-19
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/self-help-guides/self-help-guide-coronavirus-covid-19>

You will only be able to return to work after you have completed the 10 days household-isolation.

You **must** contact your manager BEFORE you return to your workplace.

Your line manager must remotely complete a return to work risk assessment with you before you return to the workplace.

My household member was positive and now I have symptoms, what do I do?

If you have possible symptoms of COVID-19 then you must assume you also have COVID-19 infection. You must immediately enter 10 days self-isolation and should request a test.

As a manager, how do I know what the result of the test is?

Staff are being trusted to be honest and truthful, and to stay away from work if they or a household member develops symptoms, no matter how mild. Staff are offered testing because negative test results will allow them to return to work earlier than the isolation rules would otherwise allow. Where a negative result is received, staff are asked to share that result with their manager to inform a decision about their early

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return to work from self- or household-isolation. All staff must speak with their line manager BEFORE returning to the workplace from self- or household-isolation.

All staff who receive a positive test result will be telephoned with advice and support from NHS Grampian as part of Test and Protect.

I previously tested positive and stayed off work for ten days, but now have new symptoms, what do I do?

It is not known how much immunity people develop after an episode of infection, or how long any immunity lasts. People who develop a new illness should again isolate and seek testing.

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Who has symptoms	What symptoms	Actions	If result negative	If result positive
Health and social care staff	Fever ($\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$), new continuous cough, and/or a loss of taste/smell	Symptomatic staff to seek covid testing and to enter 10 days isolation while awaiting result Other household member(s) also enter 10 days isolation while awaiting result	Stay off work until better including no fever for 48 hours Household isolation lifted	Await call from contact tracer and complete 10 days isolation Complete 10 days household isolation
	Chills, sore throat, headache, runny nose, shortness of breath, general weakness, muscle pain, diarrhoea	Symptomatic staff to seek covid testing and to enter 10 days isolation while awaiting result No household isolation	Stay off work until better including no fever or diarrhoea for 48 hours	Await call from contact tracer and complete 10 days isolation Household members enter 10 days household isolation
Household member(s) including children	Fever ($\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$), new continuous cough, and/or a loss of taste/smell	Symptomatic person to seek covid testing and to enter 10 days isolation while awaiting result Staff member and other household member(s) also enter 10 days isolation while awaiting result	Stay off work or school until better including no fever for 48 hours Household isolation lifted	Await call from contact tracer and complete 10 days isolation Complete 10 days household isolation
	Chills, sore throat, headache, runny nose, shortness of breath, general weakness, muscle pain, diarrhoea	Symptomatic person to stay off work or school until better including no fever or diarrhoea for 48 hours. No covid testing. No household isolation.		