

The Public Health Agency has put in place new PCR testing protocols to help protect the testing system in Northern Ireland and ensure availability of testing for those who need it.

If you develop [COVID-19 symptoms](#), self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](#), even if your symptoms are mild. Many people experience mild symptoms from COVID-19, but may still pass on the virus to others.

You should self-isolate at home while you wait for your PCR test wait for your test result.

You should self-isolate if your test result is positive.

It is no longer necessary for children under five years of age to take a PCR test – even if they have symptoms like a cough or temperature – unless advised to do so by their doctor.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); OR
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); OR
- a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste.

There are two ways to get a coronavirus test: going to a testing centre or [getting a test kit delivered to your home](#).

Testing in Northern Ireland can be booked at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

If you have questions about a test you've booked you can call free phone 119 or 0300 303 2713.

Testing after a positive test

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 and as long as you remain asymptomatic you are advised to not:

- undertake a PCR within 90 days of testing positive;
- undertake regular LFT tests for a period of three weeks after testing positive except to determine when your isolation period ends as per current isolation policy.

If you develop new COVID symptoms within 90 days period you should retest using a PCR test.

If you test positive for coronavirus using a lateral flow test you need to report your result on the government website. You can ring 119 for assistance with this if necessary.

How do I use the test?

Note: all tests are self-swab

The test involves you taking a swab of the nose and the back of the throat. You can find guidance on this including a video [here](#).

Instructions for the test kit with translations can be found [here](#).

You can watch a video explaining the process for drive-through testing [here](#).

If a child is to be tested, parents/guardians will need to swab the child. Instructions on how to use a test kit on a child are available [here](#). You can also watch a video on swabbing your child [here](#).

Testing of close contacts

All close contacts receive a text message or call advising them to follow [this advice](#).

Testing for care home residents and staff

Information on testing for care home residents and staff is available [here](#).

Testing centres (drive through test sites).

Testing is currently conducted in fixed drive-through sites operating at:

- Derry/Londonderry site: The LYCRA Company Car park, near The Rec Club (Approach using A2 Clooney Road from 'Maydown Roundabout')

towards Coleraine / Limavady following E-signs

- Central Sports Arena, Kernan Hill Road, Craigavon, BT63 5YB
- St Angelo Airport, 62 Killadeas Road, Trory, Enniskillen BT94 2FP
- Antrim Business Park, Randalstown Road, Antrim, BT41 4LD
- Duncrue Street (access via York Street), Belfast, BT3 9AQ (The site is located between China Cash & Carry and DAERA)

All centres above are open seven days a week 09:00 – 17:30pm.

In addition to the five fixed sites, mobile testing units operate across Northern Ireland.

Mobile testing units provide a temporary testing site that can be set up quickly in response to local demand. The mobile testing units are currently at:

- Bloomfield Shopping Centre - Upper deck of Twin deck (Carpark A), South Circular Road, Bangor, BT19 7HB
- Ulster University (Car Park 9), Shore Road, Newtownabbey, BT37 OQB
- Killymeal Road Car Park, Killymeal Road, Dungannon, BT71 6LJ
- Ballymena County Hall, 182, Galgorm Road, Antrim BT42 1QE

The mobile testing units are open from 9.00am to 3.00pm and can be booked through the normal booking channels.

You will see the locations across Northern Ireland as you book a test or alternatively ask staff if you call 119.

All walk through test sites are open seven days a week (08:00am to 6:00pm)

- Ulster University (Car Park 4), Cromore Road, Coleraine, BT52 1SA
- Car Park at Queen's Sports Club (PEC), Stranmillis Embankment, BT9 5YR
- Longstone Car Park, Lisburn, BT28 1DD
- Albert Basin/St Christopher Park, William Street, Newry BT34 2D
- Lisanelly Avenue, Omagh, BT79 7BQ

- Woodlands Playing Fields, 146 Finaghy Road, Belfast, BT10 0JE
- Rear Hockey Pitch, Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre, 33 Garryduff Road, Ballymoney, BT53 7DB
- All Weather Pitch, Dunleath Park, Ballydugan Road, Downpatrick, BT30 6LZ
- Templemore Sports Complex, main car park, Bunrana Road, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 7QL

Don't forget you must book a test appointment.

To see how to use a walk-through test site see [here](#).

If you are attending a walkthrough test site for a PCR test site then you need to wear a mask, even if normally exempt in a shop or on public transport, unless you are under the age of 3. If you cannot wear a face covering please choose a drive-through or home test option.

Receiving your results

The testing programme aims to provide results within 24-48 hours of taking a test at a test site. Results through the home delivery service may take up to 72 hours.

Please ensure you enter the correct contact details when you register. Note you cannot receive a test result without registering your kit on the website.

What happens to the test results

Results are communicated to individuals directly by email and will be fed back into public health records in due course.

Home tests

If you require a kit to be completed at home you can request one at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Please note, at times there may be limited availability. You can book at any time, but it may help with securing a kit on the day required if booking is made between 8am and 9am.

You can book a maximum of four test kits with each booking.

Once you order a home-test kit, the test kit should be delivered the next day.

You will then book Royal Mail courier to arrive the day after to collect your swab and take it to the lab.

Each kit comes with comprehensive instructions to guide you through how to administer the swab yourself. Test kits come with further instructions and a short video to take you through the process step by step.

Protection of personal data

Amazon and Royal Mail are the commercial partners who are delivering home testing nationwide. They do not have access to the results or any health data.

Test results and staying safe

You may be able to end your self-isolation period after five full days of isolation, with release on day six, provided you have two consecutive negative lateral flow test results taken 24 hours apart, with the first of these taken no earlier than day five.

If both these test results are negative, and **you do not have a high temperature**, you may end your self-isolation immediately following the second negative test result on day six.

You can find out more [here](#).

Those who leave self-isolation early are strongly advised to limit close contact with other people in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces and minimise contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19.

It is vital those who test negative continue to follow [guidance including precautions related to social distancing](#).

The number for the NHS contact centre for results enquiries is 119.

Privacy information

Privacy information on COVID-19 testing can be found [here](#).

Testing for HSC staff members

HSC staff should contact their line manager for details on how to arrange testing. Some Trusts are also able to facilitate testing for primary care staff in their testing facilities.

Other testing

We would advise caution about obtaining testing from non-governmental sources. A positive or negative test will not be recognised by the HSC and will not change the advice given. You will still have to observe recommended isolation periods.

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