



Coronavirus

NHS Test and Trace FAQs



City of Westminster



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NHS Test and Trace FAQs

1. How will my personal information be stored by NHS Test and Trace?

The personally identifiable information collected by NHS Test and Trace is confidential and protected in several ways. It is held on computer systems, which have been tested to make sure they are secure and are being kept up to date to make sure they are safe from viruses and hacking.

The information collected via this scheme can only be seen by NHS Test and Trace staff and organisations supporting testing and tracing efforts (Public Health England, Local Authority (the council), NHS professionals, and outsourced organisations like SERCO UK/ SITEL group which provide extra staffing).

Information may be shared with local public health experts* if your case is complex, for example, if you work in or have recently visited:

- a health or care setting, such as a hospital or care home
- a prison or other secure setting
- a school for people with special needs
- critical national infrastructure or areas vital for national security

*Local public health experts are Public Health England staff and teams employed by your local authority who work together with all parts of the local community to prevent or respond to local outbreaks.

For more information, please visit the [NHS Test and Trace privacy notice](#).

2. How will my information be stored on the NHS COVID-19 app?

Any data shared with the NHS COVID-19 app is held on your phone, nobody, including the government, will know who or where you are, or have been. You can delete the app and all data at any time.

For more information on the app's data and privacy, please visit the [NHS COVID-19 app FAQs](#).

3. How will my personal information be used?

Your personally identifiable information will only be used for COVID-19 purposes, such as research or clinical trials for COVID-19, planning of services or actions in response to COVID-19 and monitoring the progress and development of COVID-19.

You have the right to get copies of your information, get it corrected, limit how it's used, object to it being used, or even deleted. Some of them are not absolute rights and Public Health England may need to continue to use your information, and they will tell you why if this is the case.

For more information, please visit the [NHS Test and Trace privacy notice](#).



4. Will my personal information be shared with the Home Office?

No. NHS Test and Trace will only share information on cases and contacts for the purposes of contact tracing and the COVID-19 response and would not share the information for other purposes.

Health professionals will not usually share personal medical data, even if requested by other government agencies, as this is likely to be a violation of a health professionals obligations under the Data Protection Act and patient confidentiality.

It will only be shared with other bodies when consent is given or under circumstances of legal necessity.

5. I've heard my information will be shared with the Police, is that right?

App users are anonymous and the app cannot force anyone to self-isolate or identify them if they are not self-isolating. The app cannot be used to track your location, for law enforcement, or to monitor self-isolation and social distancing.

However, we hope that you will follow app advice to self-isolate to protect your loved ones, our communities and stop the spread of the virus. Please visit the [NHS COVID-19 app FAQs for more information](#).

6. Do I have to download the app?

No. Downloading and using the NHS COVID-19 app is entirely voluntary and you can choose whether or not to download it. You can also uninstall and delete the app whenever you like.

The app is a vital tool in helping you protect the ones you love. Every person who uses the app will be helping in the fight against coronavirus (COVID-19) so we'd really urge you to download it and to encourage your family and friends to do the same.

7. Are contact details from Test and Trace used for the vaccination programme?

No. NHS Test and Trace will only share information on cases and contacts for the purposes of contact tracing and the COVID-19 response and would not share the information for other purposes.

8. Why should I pass on contact details of close contacts for the Test and Trace service if I can contact them myself?

It is important that NHS Test and Trace contact your close contacts directly through the Test and Trace service. This allows NHS Test and Trace to explain what those at risk of having been exposed to coronavirus must do to help prevent the further spread of the virus. It also allows us to monitor and act on any transmission of the virus across our city.

It is important that you respond as soon as possible so that NHS Test and Trace can give appropriate advice to those who need it.

All information you provide to NHS Test and Trace is held in strict confidence and will only be kept and used in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.



9. Won't the app drain my phone's battery?

No. The app uses Bluetooth so shouldn't drain your phone battery, especially if you normally have Bluetooth enabled.

10. How long is personal data on COVID-19 patients kept for?

Up to 20 years for those who have tested positive. Up to five years for contacts.

Information needs to be kept for this long because COVID-19 is a new disease and it may be necessary to know who has been infected, or been in close contact with someone with symptoms, to help control any future outbreaks or to provide any new treatments.

11. Types of tests, testing kit and administration

SYMPTOMATIC TEST (PCR test): This is a test to see if you currently have the virus.

The test usually involves taking a swab of the inside of your nose and the back of your throat, using a long cotton bud.

If you take the test yourself at home, take care not to touch your tongue, teeth, or gums, or any other surfaces with the swab. Put it back in the tube, fabric side facing down, and send back the same day as the test. Make sure you book collection in advance.

There is no difference in accuracy if the test is self-administered at home or at a test centre, as the process of taking the test is the same.

SYMPTOM FREE TEST (rapid lateral flow test):

Lateral flow device (LFD) testing is a fast and simple way to test people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

Taking a lateral flow test usually involves taking a sample from the back of the throat near the tonsils and from the nose, using a swab.

The swab is dipped into an extraction solution. This is then dripped on to the device's paper pad, producing the reaction that gives the result.

The result will be visible on the device precisely 30 minutes after the sample is applied. Unlike a PCR test, there is no need to send the sample to a lab.

ANTIBODY TEST: This is a test to see if you have previously had the virus.

If someone had the virus and has recovered, it is assumed that the body would have produced some antibodies to fight it. This test identifies the presence of those antibodies.

The test works by taking a blood sample and testing for the presence of antibodies to see if the individual has developed an immune response to the virus.

As of 30 June 2020, antibody tests are currently only open to health and social care workers. Please see the [GOV.UK guidance on antibody tests](#) for the latest advice and information.

There is no strong evidence yet to suggest that people who are found to have had the virus and have antibodies develop long-lasting immunity which would prevent them from getting the virus again. Regardless of having antibodies, it's crucial that you continue to follow social distancing and exercise good hand hygiene to prevent contracting the virus and/or passing it onto others.



PRIVATE TESTS: Paid tests in private settings.

The NHS has not made testing kits available to private clinicians and they do not have an obligation to share the data with the NHS and Public Health England. The Government cannot account for the accuracy of the tests, and the subsequent advice received after it. If you develop symptoms, we urge you to use NHS testing.

12. Is the test painful?

The test may be uncomfortable, and may feel like gagging, but it should not hurt.

It may be reassuring to know that a lot of people have taken the test and managed the discomfort. Confirmation of diagnosis can be reassuring to people who are worried if they have it or not.

13. What is the procedure for collecting or sending the symptomatic home testing kit?

If you ask for a home testing kit, you will receive information on collecting and sending back the kit once you've ordered the test. When the test arrives, you will need to book a courier using the information provided within the test. The courier can usually arrive the next day between 8am and 4pm.

The test needs to be done the same day that the courier collects it – i.e. if your test arrives on a Wednesday, book the courier for the Thursday and do the test Thursday morning so it's fresh.

14. Can I get a test more than once?

Anyone in England and Wales can get a free symptomatic or symptom free test (depending on whether they have symptoms) to check if they have the virus, regardless of having received a test for the virus before.

You must stay at home (self-isolate) again and ask for a test if you get symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) (high temperature, new and continuous cough, or loss or change to your sense of smell or taste).

15. Internet access and translations

If you need to access Test and Trace in another language, please either use the **NHS COVID-19 app** or **call NHS 119**. The call centre staff have people who speak different languages and access to translation.

There are over 22,000 people in the contact tracing team – with the ability to communicate in multiple languages.

If you test positive for coronavirus, you will be sent a link to the NHS Test and Trace website and asked to create a confidential account where you can record details about your recent close contacts. If you do not have internet access or if you don't complete the online process, one of the contact tracers will phone you to gather this information from you. Translators are available.

16. How can I share the details of the people I don't know?

This is why using the app is so important, it notifies other app users if they have come into contact with someone who has since tested positive for the virus.



If you test positive for coronavirus, you will either receive an alert via the app if you use the app, or via NHS Test and Trace who will send you a text, email alert or call you with instructions on how to share details of people you've been in close contact with

Close contact means:

- Face-to-face contact with someone less than 1 metre away
- Spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of someone
- Travelling in a car or other small vehicle with someone

If you have been notified via NHS Test and Trace, it's important that you respond as soon as possible so that NHS Test and Trace can give appropriate advice to those who need it.

You will be told to do this online via a secure website or you will be called by one of the contract tracers.

17. What if I do not want to provide details, or if those who I have had close contact with try to persuade me not to hand them over?

The scheme is voluntary. However, we all have a role to play in helping to make the Test and Trace service work. The more we use Test and Trace, the sooner we will be able to return to life as close to normal as possible.

We trust the public to "do the right thing" but if you feel uncomfortable about using NHS Test and Trace, we would like to understand the reasons for not wanting to use the service.

If compliance is low, penalties – such as fines – may be introduced for non-compliance.

18. Should I get a test if I am alerted?

Yes. If you have been identified as having been in close contact with someone who has a positive test you must stay at home for 10 days, even if you do not have symptoms.

As a close contact, you are asked to get a PCR (symptomatic) test, whether you have symptoms or not. Anyone in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus must continue to self-isolate for the 10 full days even if your result is negative, as you could still become infectious.

19. Will I only need to self-isolate once? What if I have already had the virus and have recovered, and alerted to self-isolate again?

Not necessarily! There is no strong evidence yet to suggest that people who are found to have had the virus and have antibodies develop long-lasting immunity which would prevent them from getting the virus again. Those being asked to self-isolate because of close contact with a confirmed case could also see this happen more than once.

Regardless of having antibodies or having knowingly had the virus, its crucial people continue to use NHS Test and Trace, follow social distancing and exercise good hand hygiene to prevent contracting the virus and/or passing it onto others.



20. NHS staff are in close contact with COVID-19 positive patients all the time. Will they be alerted to self-isolate as well?

NHS staff will be wearing PPE and will be being tested on a weekly basis. This will help reduce their exposure. If NHS staff are exposed outside of their work environment then they would be expected to self-isolate as in that case they are in the same position as everyone else.

21. When should I self-isolate from?

Anyone who needs to isolate due to symptoms or is confirmed as having coronavirus, should do so immediately from when they experience symptoms. If they have not had symptoms, the 10 days start from the date of the test.

If you are a household or close contact, your isolation period begins from when symptoms started or the day they were tested, if they have not had symptoms.

Further information can be found on the [NHS website](#).

22. What support is available for people who are asked to self-isolate?

Financial: From 28 September 2020, a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 is potentially available if you are self-isolating because of COVID-19 and you are either employed or self-employed. The payment is to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and lose income as a result. As of 22 March, parents and carers of children who have been advised to self-isolate by their education setting or by NHS Test and Trace are now also able to apply, if they meet the eligibility criteria. For more information, head to the [council website](#).

Practical/ Social: Westminster Connects or any other mutual-aid, voluntary or faith group you are associated with can support you if you need help during your self-isolation. To get support through Westminster Connects, please contact:

westminsterconnects@westminster.gov.uk

020 7641 1222 (9am to 6pm, seven days a week).

If you are concerned about an adult who you think requires social care and support, or you have a safeguarding concern, please phone **020 7641 1444** or **020 7641 1175** or email adultsocialcare@westminster.gov.uk

23. How do you know if you're being scammed?

If you want to be sure that the NHS Test and Trace call is valid, you can hang up and dial **NHS 119** or the NHS Test and Trace helpline number **0203 514 3817**.

Contact tracers will:

- call you from **0300 013 5000**
- send you text messages from 'NHStracing'
- ask you to sign into the NHS test and trace contact-tracing website.
- ask for your full name and DOB to confirm your identity, and postcode to offer support while self-isolating



- ask about the coronavirus symptoms you have been experiencing
- ask you to provide the name, telephone number and/or email address of anyone you have had close contact with in the two days prior to your symptoms starting
- ask if anyone you have been in contact with is under 18 or lives outside of England

They will not:

- ask you to dial a premium rate number (for example, those starting 09 or 087)
- ask you to make any form of payment or purchase a product or any kind
- ask for any details about your bank account
- ask for your social media identities or login details, or those of your contacts
- ask you for any passwords or PINs, or ask you to set up any
- disclose any of your personal or medical information to your contacts
- provide medical advice on the treatment of any potential coronavirus symptoms
- ask you to access any website that does not belong to the government or NHS
- ask you to download any software to your PC or ask you to hand over control of your PC, smartphone or tablet to anyone else

24. What training have contact tracers had?

Contact tracers are paid staff who process forms online and respond to emails and calls. They have received mandatory training in using their script, providing answers to FAQs, signposting effectively and managing data in accordance with data protection laws. They are not trained to provide medical advice on the treatment of any potential coronavirus symptoms.

25. Where can I find the latest Test and Trace data?

The latest government data can be found at coronavirus.data.gov.uk

26. I don't understand the Government coronavirus data, what does 'rate' mean?

The [GOV.UK coronavirus in the UK data](https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk) shows the latest number of coronavirus (COVID-19) tests, cases and deaths in the UK.

The data is updated daily and breaks down the information by nation, region and council. It includes the total number of cases, as well as another column listing the 'rate'. The rate means the number of infections per 100,000 of the population meaning the number of people per 100,000 within an area who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Using rates per 100,00 allows us to compare the level of infection across London and nationally.

27. Where can I get a test?

Testing is the most effective way to control the spread of coronavirus. Westminster is now offering two types of coronavirus testing:

- for people who are not showing any symptoms (symptom-free testing or rapid lateral flow tests)
- for people who have symptoms of the virus (a new persistent cough, high temperature or a loss or change in sense of smell or taste)

For information on how to get tested, please visit the [council website](#).



28. What are you doing about the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BAME people?

We are of course acutely aware of the Public Health England (PHE) COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report and the issues raised within it.

We know that older age, ethnicity, male sex and geographical area, for example, are associated with the risk of getting coronavirus, experiencing more severe symptoms and sadly in some cases, death. In response to the PHE review, the government has set up an Equality Hub to take this work forward and to understand the factors which may contribute to this. We are working hard to understand the key drivers of the disparities identified and will do all we can to act in Westminster.

29. Someone in my household is experiencing symptoms of coronavirus, do I need to clean or take the bins out more often?

Please continue to use your normal household cleaning products like detergents and bleach as they are very effective at getting rid of any virus on surfaces. Clean frequently touched places such as door handles or table-tops regularly. Clean a shared bathroom every time you use it, by wiping the surfaces touched.

Personal waste, like tissues etc, can be stored in disposable rubbish bags. Put this bag in another bag, tie it securely and keep it separate from your other household waste. Keep it aside for 72 hours before being put in your normal waste bin.

30. Can I breastfeed if I have COVID-19?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted through breast milk. However, infection can spread to the baby as a result of close contact.

However, there is strong evidence that children with COVID-19 get much less severe symptoms than adult. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risk of transmission of virus in any way, however this will be an individual decision which should be discussed with your midwife, health visitor or GP. If you are using formula or expressed milk, sterilise the equipment before every use. Don't share bottles or breast pump with anyone else.

31. If one person (child or staff) tests positive in a school bubble, what happens with the rest of the bubble/ class/ school? Do they all need to self-isolate?

Not necessarily but it is likely that the affected class group/bubble will be sent home and told to self-isolate for 10 days. Public Health England will advise the school if there is a confirmed case and whether to send the whole school/class group/bubble home, the school will then advise pupils, families and staff accordingly.

The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.



32. What do I do at the end of 10 days of self-isolation?

If you have had symptoms of coronavirus, then you may end your self-isolation after 10 days and return to your normal routine, as long as you no longer have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell/taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal.

If you continue to feel unwell and have not already sought medical advice, you should use the [NHS 111 online coronavirus \(COVID-19\) service](#). If you do not have internet access, call [NHS 111](#). If it's a medical emergency, dial [999](#).

Everyone else in the household and your close contacts who remain well should complete their 10-days isolation. This 10-day period starts from the day the first person in the household became ill. People in the household who remain well after 10 days are unlikely to be infectious so can end their self-isolation after that time.

If someone develops coronavirus symptoms during their 10-day self-isolation period, they will need to stay at home for at least a further 10 days and should arrange to have a test. Please see the government's [Stay at home guidance](#).

33. What support is available for home testing for people with additional learning or mental health needs?

Public Health England advise that in addition to requesting home tests, anyone needing a test can visit a satellite testing centre or an NHS facility to be tested. These sites will be staffed and able to support people unable to self-administer swabs.

For more information, please see the [government guidance on COVID-19 testing](#).

34. How can venues maintain records of visitors, customers and staff?

It's a legal requirement for all hospitality, leisure and close contact businesses as well as local authority facilities to prominently display the NHS app QR code within their premises.

Other businesses and organisations are encouraged to display official NHS QR code posters at their venue entrances to help support contact tracing.

To find out how to do this, please visit the [GOV.UK guidance on Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace](#).

35. What should my organisation do if someone does not wish to share their details, or provides incorrect information?

Although this is voluntary, please encourage customers and visitors to share their details in order to support NHS Test and Trace and advise them that this information will only be used where necessary to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

For more information and advice, visit the section on information to collect within the [GOV.UK guidance on Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace](#).



36. When should my organisation share information with NHS Test and Trace?

NHS Test and Trace will ask for your recent customer and visitor records only where it is necessary.

For more information on how and when this might take place, please visit the section on When information should be shared with NHS Test and Trace within the [GOV.UK guidance on Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace](#).

37. Do I need to close my establishment if I am contacted by NHS Test and Trace?

If you receive a request for information from NHS Test and Trace this does not mean that you must close your establishment. NHS Test and Trace will, if necessary, undertake an assessment and work with you to understand what actions need to be taken.

For more information, please visit the section on How NHS Test and Trace will take steps to minimise transmission with the [GOV.UK guidance on Maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace](#).



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