

COVID-19: Clinical interpretation of test results for key workers and household members

Scope and purpose

COVID-19 testing is currently being offered to key workers and their household members in the NHS, social care and other sectors. On identifying symptoms in the key worker and/or household member, the key worker's employer will arrange for the individual with symptoms to undergo COVID-19 testing.

This guidance is aimed at healthcare workers, such as general practitioners and occupational health professionals, providing care to key workers and/or their household members in relation to testing for COVID-19 as part of key worker testing. It summarises the eligibility criteria for testing of key workers and recommendations to aid the interpretation of test results.

Rationale

Testing aims to identify self-isolating key workers with a negative result who can safely return to work prior to the currently defined period outlined in the national self-isolation guidance, at a time when public services face immense pressures.

This guidance is **not** intended as a replacement for clinical testing that would form part of a symptomatic individual's care.

If key workers or their household members have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and their condition gets worse, or they do not get better after 7 days, they should use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service. If they do not have internet access, they should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency, they should dial 999.

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It is critical that only eligible individuals undergo COVID-19 testing. This is to ensure efficacy of the test itself, and to ensure that all tests are being used to help get key workers who are self-isolating back to work.

What are the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

A new continuous cough and/or a high temperature (>37.8°C)

Who is eligible for COVID-19 testing?

To be eligible for testing you must be either:

- a key worker, with COVID-19 symptoms OR
- an adult or child with COVID-19 symptoms, living in the same household as a key worker

If you are a key worker who is self-isolating for other reasons and you do not have COVID-19 symptoms, you are **not** eligible to be tested.

Arranging testing

Once eligibility for testing has been confirmed, the key worker's employer will arrange for the individual(s) to have a COVID-19 test, which is performed by taking a swab of the throat and nose. The swab will be taken at designated regional testing sites or at home, based on the symptoms of the individual being tested and their ability to access regional testing.

Testing should be performed **within the first five days of the onset of the individual's COVID-19 symptoms**. Testing should not be undertaken after day five, unless it is for a specific reason agreed on a case by case basis by local microbiologists.

The test must be performed at a regional testing site with a capacity for self-testing.

Household contacts under 18 years old must be accompanied by a parent or guardian from the same household who can perform the test on the under 18-year-old.

- **12 to 18-year-olds** may elect to perform the test themselves with parental guidance, have the test performed by a parent/guardian or an administered test.
- **5 to 12-year-olds** should not perform the test themselves and should always have the test performed by a parent/guardian.

- **Under 5-year-olds** will require a specific test kit to ensure the best quality of sample is taken and should always have the test performed by a parent/guardian. If the specific test kit is not available, under 5s should not be tested.

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Clinical interpretation of COVID-19 test results

SARS CoV 2 [COVID-19] RNA result	Interpretative comment exported to health care worker or household member of a health care worker	What should Occupational Health advise a key worker who has symptoms and this result?	What should Occupational Health advise the key worker if a household member has symptoms and this result?
<p>Inconclusive</p>	<p>Dear [FIRST NAME] [SURNAME], your recent test for COVID-19 [SARS CoV 2 RNA] was unfortunately INCONCLUSIVE and a repeat test is needed.</p> <p>Please contact the key worker's employer to arrange to have a repeat test as soon as possible.</p> <p>You MUST continue to self-isolate for 7 days from the onset of symptoms whilst waiting for another test. Please follow the advice on the NHS website: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/.</p> <p><u>You must keep self-isolating until your temperature is normal.</u> You do not need to self-isolate if you just have a cough after 7 days, as a cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone</p> <p>You may no longer be eligible for a repeat test if it is over 5 days since your symptoms started; in which case</p>	<p>The key worker should self-isolate for 7 days from the onset of symptoms.</p> <p>They can return to work on day 8 providing they have not had a high temperature for 48 hours.</p> <p>If they still have a high temperature, they need to keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. They do not need to self-isolate if they just have a cough after 7 days, as a cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.</p> <p>A repeat test should be requested if the key worker has had symptoms for less than 5 days. Return to work can occur if the above criteria are met even if the test result is still outstanding. For further information regarding return to work criteria, visit: HCW guidance.</p>	<p>If the household member is informed the result was INCONCLUSIVE and they have persistent symptoms, then</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A repeat test should be requested for the household member • The household member should continue to self-isolate for 7 days from the onset of symptoms. <p>Regarding the key worker, apply national self-isolation guidance, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If asymptomatic, continue to self-isolate for 14 days from onset of the household member's symptoms before returning to work, or • If the key worker develops symptoms, they should self-isolate until 7 days from onset of symptoms and can return to work on day 8 providing they have not had a high temperature for 48 hours.

	<p>please continue to apply the national guidance on self-isolation.</p> <p>If multiple household members have been tested and one is positive, please continue to apply national guidance and self-isolate. Household members without symptoms must self-isolate for 14 days from the onset of the first symptomatic individual.</p> <p>If your condition gets worse, or you do not get better after 7 days, use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.</p> <p>To stay healthy, continue to follow preventative measures (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).</p>		
Negative	<p>Dear [FIRST NAME] [SURNAME], your recent COVID-19 [SARS CoV 2 RNA] test has come back NEGATIVE.</p> <p>If you are a key worker, please contact your employer as soon as possible about returning to work. If you are not a key worker, please tell the key worker so that they can contact their employer.</p>	<p>The key worker can be advised to return to work immediately, providing they are well enough, and have not had a high temperature for 48 hours.</p> <p>If they still have a high temperature, they need to keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. If the key worker has persistent symptoms, carry out a local risk assessment. A repeat test may be required based on clinical</p>	<p>If the household member is symptomatic, they can cease COVID-19 isolation.</p> <p>If the key worker is asymptomatic, they can return to work immediately.</p>

	<p>You can stop self-isolating and return to work, providing you have not had a high temperature for 48 hours.</p> <p>To stay healthy, continue to follow preventative measures (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus).</p> <p>If your condition gets worse, or you do not get better after 7 days, use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.</p>	<p>assessment. For further information regarding return to work criteria, visit: HCW guidance.</p>	
<p>Positive</p>	<p>Dear [FIRST NAME] [SURNAME], your COVID-19 [SARS CoV 2 RNA] test has come back POSITIVE.</p> <p>Please inform the key worker's employer as soon as possible.</p> <p>You MUST continue to self-isolate until 7 days from the onset of the symptoms. If you are well on day 8, and you have not had a high temperature for 48 hours, you do not need to continue to self-isolate.</p> <p>If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature has been normal for 48 hours. You do not need to self-isolate if you just have a cough after 7 days, as a cough can last</p>	<p>The key worker should self-isolate until 7 days from the onset of symptoms. They can return to work on day 8 providing they have not had a high temperature for 48 hours.</p> <p>If the key worker has already returned to work after self-isolating for 7 days, they do not need to self-isolate further on the basis this result. For further information regarding return to work criteria, visit: HCW guidance.</p>	<p>If the household member is informed the result was positive, they should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-isolate until 7 days from onset of symptoms and can return to work on day 8 if they have not had a high temperature for 48 hours. <p>Regarding the key worker, apply national self-isolation guidance, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If asymptomatic, continue to self-isolate for 14 days from onset of the household member's symptoms before returning to work, or • If the key worker develops symptoms, they should self-

	<p>for several weeks after the infection has gone.</p> <p>If your condition gets worse, or you do not get better after 7 days, use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.</p>		<p>isolate until 7 days from the onset of symptoms and can return to work on day 8 providing they have not had a high temperature for 48 hours.</p>
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NOTE: If multiple symptomatic members of a household are tested, and just one household member tests positive for COVID-19, the key worker should still self-isolate for 7 days from onset of their symptoms even if they test negative.

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Only key worker testing

POSITIVE

Key worker self-isolates until 7 days from the onset of symptoms
Returns to work on day 8 providing no high temperature for 48 hours and well enough to return to work

NEGATIVE

Key worker returns to work immediately, providing well enough

INCONCLUSIVE

Key worker asks employer for repeat test and continues to self-isolate until 7 days from the onset of symptoms
Returns to work on day 8 providing no high temperature for 48 hours and well enough to return to work

Only household member testing

POSITIVE

Key worker self-isolates for 14 days from onset of the household member's symptoms

NEGATIVE

Key worker returns to work immediately, providing well enough

INCONCLUSIVE

Key worker asks employer for repeat test for household member
Key worker self-isolates for 14 days from onset of the household member's symptoms

Both key worker and household member testing

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	INCONCLUSIVE
<p>If ANY symptomatic member of the household tests positive and the key worker tests negative, the key worker self-isolates for 14 days from the onset of symptoms, even if the key worker tests negative</p> <p>If the key worker tests positive, then can return to work on day 8 of their symptoms providing no high temperature for 48 hours and well enough to return to work</p>	<p>If ALL symptomatic members of the household test negative, the key worker returns to work immediately, providing well enough</p>	<p>Key worker asks employer for repeat test and self-isolates for 14 days from the onset of symptoms or until repeat results available</p> <p>If all repeat tests are negative, the key worker returns to work immediately, providing well enough</p> <p>If the key worker tests positive, they can return to work on day 8 providing no high temperature for 48 hours and well enough to return to work.</p> <p>If ANY symptomatic member of the household tests positive and the key worker tests negative, the key worker can return to work on day 8 of the key worker's symptoms providing no high temperature for 48 hours and well enough to return to work</p>

If multiple symptomatic members of a household are tested, and just one household member tests positive for COVID-19, the key worker should still self-isolate for 7 days from onset of their symptoms even if they test negative.