



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Department of Health and Social Care National Testing Programme

Standard Operating Procedures and Guidance for
Covid-19 PCR Testing in General Practice

Published 04 November 2020

This guidance is correct at the time of publishing, but may be updated to reflect changes in advice in the context of COVID-19.

To provide feedback about this SOP and guidance, please contact organisation.coronavirus.testing@notifications.service.gov.uk

Operational queries should be directed to 119 Help Desk

Document Version 3

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1. Background

1.1 Scope

This document describes the procedural standards and operating features for COVID-19 PCR swab testing in general practice, setting out the requirements for safe implementation. We trust healthcare professionals to use their clinical judgement when applying this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and guidance in what we appreciate is a highly challenging, rapidly changing environment.

This guidance applies to general practices operating under contract to the NHS in England (GMS/APMS contracts) including those providers that operate outside core GP contract hours.

1.2 Related Links

Related links for the case definition of COVID-19 and government guidance, guidance and standard operating procedures for general practice in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19), Infection prevention and control Clinical waste and PPE can be found in section 4, Safety Procedures and Practical Considerations.

2. Service Overview

HS Test and Trace is making COVID-19 swab testing available to general practices in England. The service will be available to all practices on a voluntary, opt in basis. This will be a supplementary option for practices and does not replace any of the existing routes to access testing. Members of the public will continue to be directed to regional testing centres or home testing kits in the first instance.

Tests will be offered to patients who present with COVID-19 symptoms in general practice settings. Following requests from GPs to have increased access to testing, these tests will also be available for symptomatic GPs, practice staff and their symptomatic household members to support general practice settings remaining operational. Testing should be self-administered as far as possible.

The service is intended to support patient care and increase access to testing for patients who would otherwise be unlikely to get a test via the primary testing routes. For example, due to barriers around language, disability or digital inclusion. Practices can use their discretion to offer swabs where they deem it to be clinically appropriate.

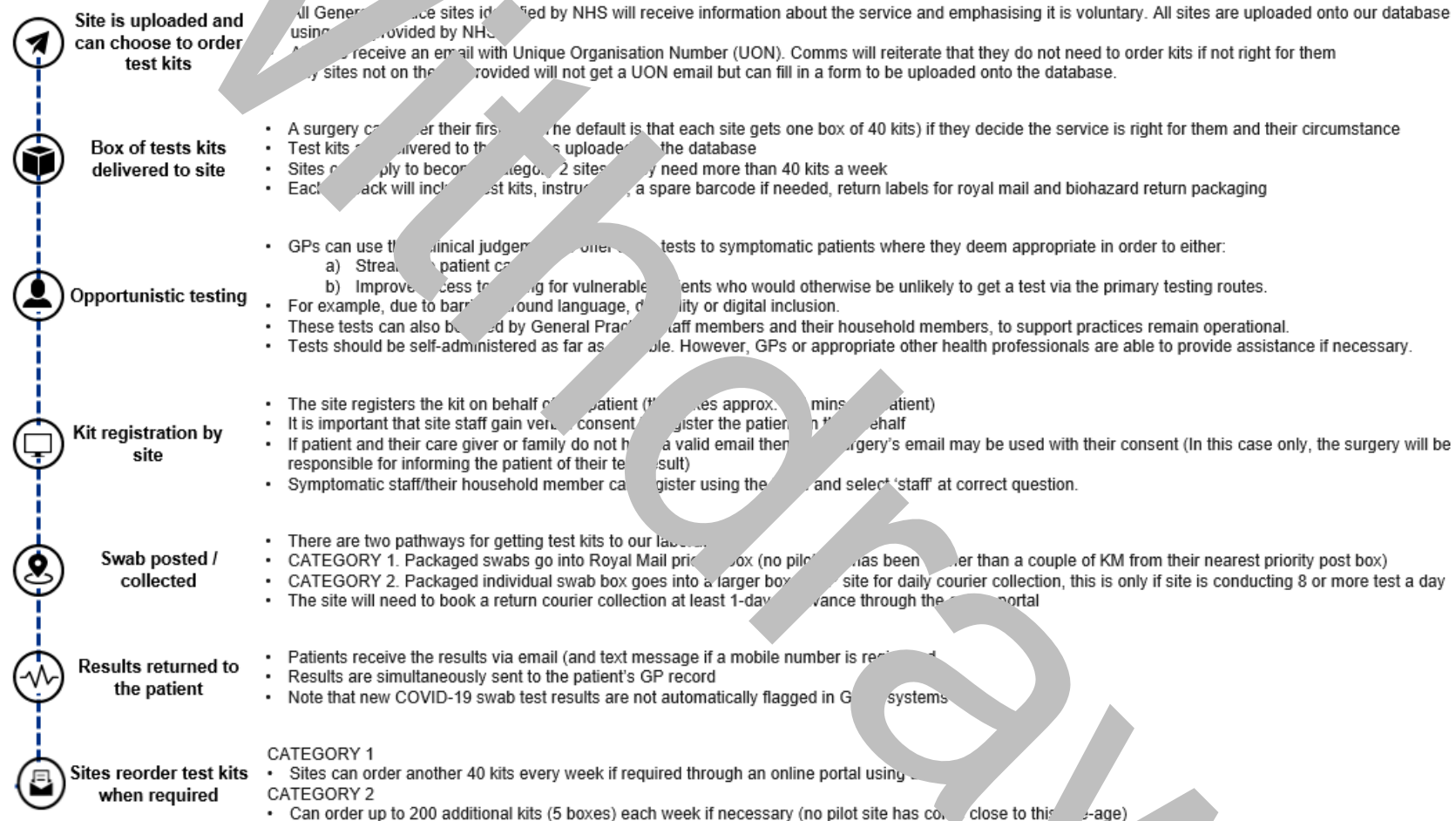
Safety considerations, practical considerations and accountabilities can be found in section 4.

3. Operational and Patient Pathway Process

3.1 End-to-End Operational Model for COVID-19 PCR Swab Testing for Symptomatic Adult and Paediatric Patients, GP Staff and Household Members in General Practices

- (a) Figure 1 below shows overall guidance for the end-to-end operational model for swab testing symptomatic patients in general practices. Please note that this process may evolve, and guidance will be updated as required.
- (b) Further guidance on the operational model and adult and paediatric patient pathways can be found in section 3.2 and 3.3 respectively.
- (c) Specific guidelines for paediatric patients can be found in section 3.2.3

Figure 1: An overview of Operational Guidance



119 Help Desk

A dedicated 119 team will specifically address inquiries relating to the operational guidance. There will be a further third line support team to address escalations from 119.

3.2 Patient Pathway Process

3.2.1 Patient Test Registration

These tests can be offered to patients who present with COVID-19 symptoms in general practice settings. GPs can use their discretion to offer the swabs where they deem it to be clinically appropriate in order to streamline patient care and/or increase/improve access to testing for patients who would otherwise be unlikely to get a test via the primary testing routes. For example, due to barriers around language, disability or digital inclusion.

- (b) General practice staff must gain verbal consent to register the patient on their behalf. It should be noted, that some patients may not be able to give informed consent themselves and in such cases, general practice processes must exist to ensure this.
- (c) It is the responsibility of the patient to provide the accurate details needed to receive their results. It must be agreed with the patient or parent/guardian where the result goes and the GP must obtain verbal consent from patients or parent/guardian for this.

3.2.2 Administering the Test – General Practice Adult and Paediatric Patients

- (a) Kits approved for testing have been validated for use with the Kingfisher lab testing platform.
- (b) Verbal consent. GP must obtain verbal consent from patients or parent/guardian for self-administration and assisted testing
- (c) Designated area for testing. Excluding general practice staff and members of their households, the test kit cannot be taken away by general practice patients and can only be administered on general practice premises, where practices decide a designated area for testing. Some general practices have space in the car park, others have a designated room/toilet that is then disinfected. See section 3.4, point c below, for infection prevention control guidance to avoid risk.
- (d) Self-Administration. The patient is provided with a Kingfisher COVID-19 swab test kit, instructions for swabbing and packaging. The member of staff responsible will be on hand to answer any questions the patient may have. Please see easy read ‘GP Self Administration’ testing instructions located in the Appendix

- (e) Assisted Testing. Where a patient is unable to self-test, the GP, nurse or allied professional will support the testing process. Please see easy read 'GP Assisted Administration' testing instructions located in the Appendix. Eligibility for assisted testing is at GP's discretion/clinical judgement and policies should be in place to ensure this.
- (f) PPE for self- administration or assisted testing.
 - (i) For patients who are undertaking their own test, it is recommended the 'gold standard' of hand hygiene with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water is carried out by the patient before testing. The member of staff needs to wear a Type IIR face mask. The patient takes the test and places swab stick into the vial, thereafter puts vial in the bag and hands bag to staff.
 - (ii) For staff who are performing the test. Adhere to national guidance on PPE for symptomatic individuals-see Section 4.1, point e. Staff member needs to wear an apron, gloves and Type IIR face mask. Risk assessment for the requirement for eye protection i.e. goggle/visor should be carried out.

3.2.3 Administering the Test; GP Staff and Members of their Households

- (a) Following registration as detailed in 3.2.1 above, general practice staff and members of their households are provided kits by their general practice.
- (b) General practice staff and members of their households self-administer tests within their households as described in section 3.2.2 point d, above.

3.2.4 Administering the Test; Paediatric Patients

Specific guidelines for paediatric patients include:

- (a) All paediatric testing must be conducted on general practice premises as previously described in Section 3.2.2, point c.
- (b) Children from the ages of 12 to 17 may elect to swab themselves under the guidance of GP/allied professional
- (c) Children aged 11 and under should not swab themselves, instead should have the swab administered by a GP/allied healthcare professional or parent/guardian

- (d) Specific instructions have been prepared and made available for swabbing young children, see Appendix 'How to use a test kit on a child'.
- (e) All sites should collate and capture feedback from parents/guardians on the use of these test kits on children 11 and under to allow opportunity for continuous improvement

3.2.5 Notification of COVID-19 PCR swab testing results

- (a) After leaving the general practice, results will be sent to the patient's registered GP system within 3-5 days and will appear in the patient's records as laboratory test results.
- (b) Patients will receive their results by text and/or email together with instructions with what to do if a positive result is given. There will be no action necessary from GP practices on receipt of these results.
- (c) If patient and their parent/care giver or family do not have a valid email then their surgery's email may be used with their consent (In this case only, the surgery will be responsible for informing the patient of their test result)
- (d) If after linking to a test barcode no result is provided within 120 hours the patient should contact the 119 helpline to check the status of the test.
- (e) Results from tests undertaken in the practice will also be sent to GP systems, whenever they are able to identify the patient's NHS number. There will be no requirement to notify the relevant Public Health body of positive results as this will be done via NHS Test and Trace

3.3 Operational Pathway Process

3.3.1 End-to-End Service in General Practice

Guidance on end-to-end operational model for testing symptomatic patients in general practice is detailed in Figure 1

3.3.2 Supply and Equipment Management

General practice sites will be responsible for managing and tracking their on-site inventory of supplies and equipment. All inventory will be supplied by the DHSC, Test Kits (Kingfisher) and PPE (including gloves, aprons, masks, goggles or visor)

3.3.3 Sample and Kit Storage

- (a) Test kits need to be stored in conditions appropriate for preserving the integrity of the complete swab. This includes, storing kits in a designated cool area away from direct sunlight (typically this is between 8°C and 22°C but each site should refer to kit manufacturer storage instructions).
- (b) Storing completed kits at ambient temperature (typically this is between 5°C and 22°C but each site should refer to kit manufacturer storage instructions).
- (c) Completed test kits will need to be packaged appropriately to mitigate infection risk to members of staff and other patients.

3.3.4 Package Your Test Kit sample



7

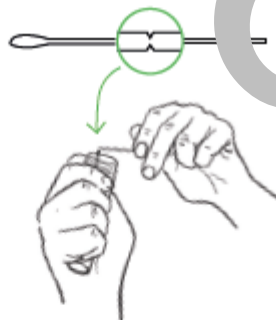
Take the nose sample

Put the same end of the same swab gently into one nostril about 2.5cm (1 inch) or until you feel some resistance.

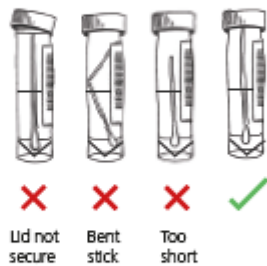
————— This line is 2.5cm or 1 inch long

Rotate the swab for **10 seconds** and slowly remove it.

If they have a piercing, use the other nostril.



Put the swab into the plastic tube with the fabric tip facing down. Snap off the top and throw away the unused end. The wet swab should fit inside the clear plastic tube without bending.



Important: The liquid must stay in the tube. Secure the lid on so no liquid can leak.

Package the swab

9

Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds using soap and warm water, and/or use sanitiser.

10

Check that the plastic tube containing the test swab has the same barcode on it as the barcode on the biohazard bag.

11

Put the tube and absorbent pad into the reusable zip-lock bag.

12

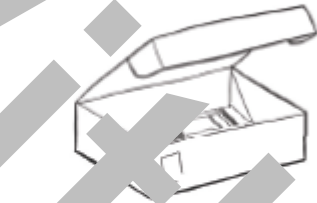
Put into the larger biohazard bag. Seal the bag using the silver seal.

13

13

The return box will have an identical barcode to the tube and biohazard bag. **Check that the barcodes match.**

Assemble the return box, following the instructions on the box. If you can, wipe down the bag and box with an antiseptic wipe.



14

Put the biohazard bag into the box and close the box.

Apply the Security Seal as directed.



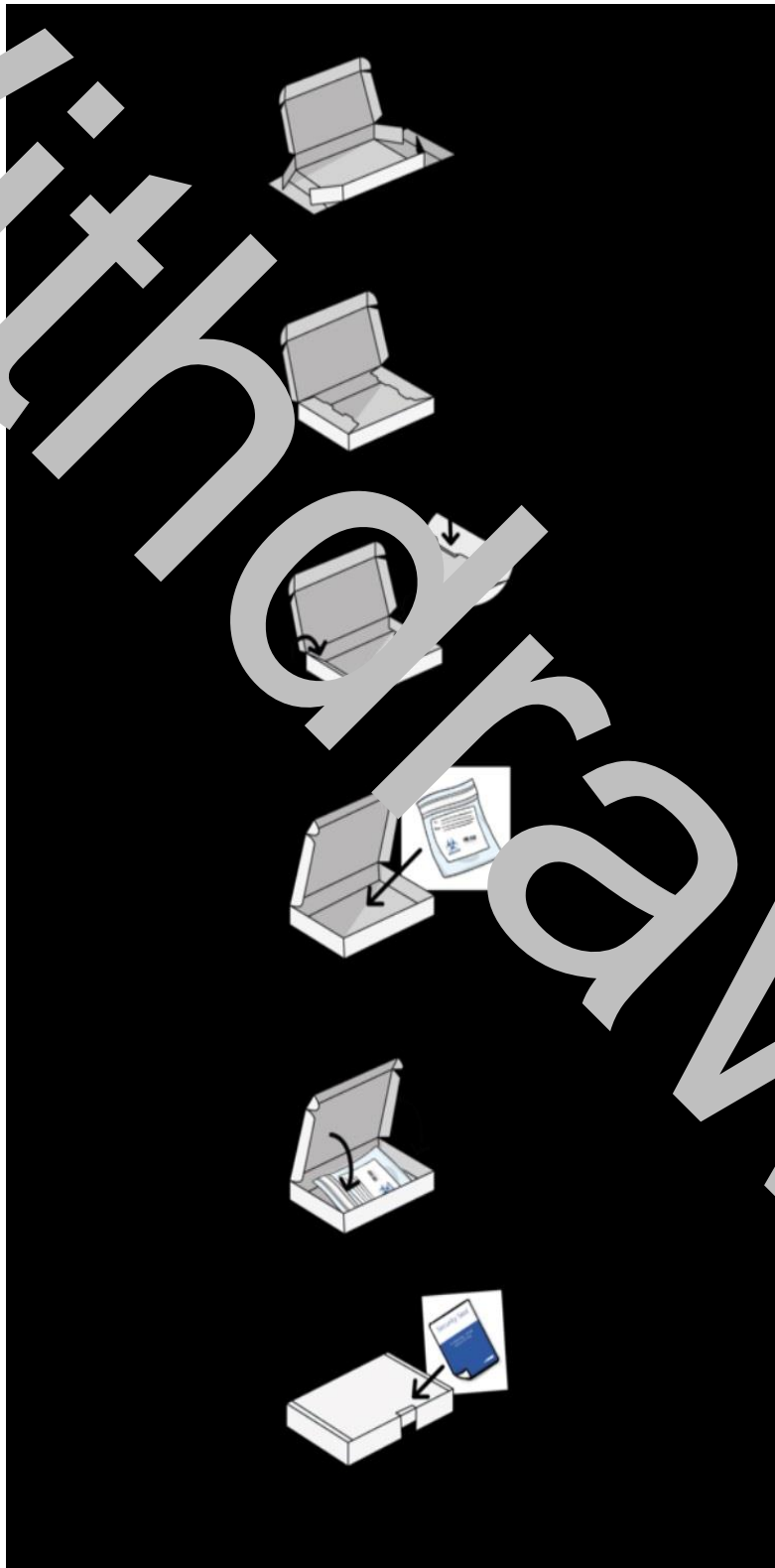
15

Take a photo of the barcode on your Royal Mail return label, so you can track the delivery.



3.2.5 Test Kit Box Assembly

This can be found on the box (please see below for an example)



3.3.6 GP Test Kit Return

Method 1: Priority post box returns (less than 8 test kits a day)

- (a) You will have ready paid return labels. Please attach these to the delivery alongside the security seal.
- (b) You will find your nearest priority post box and its collection times at www.royalmail.com/services-near-you
- (c) Work with your representative to ensure your site / service is clear on timings. Please be aware of the following key points to ensure samples reach the laboratories in time:
 - (i) Do not put any completed tests in a priority box on Sunday (unless you have a courier collection booked no testing should be conducted on a Sunday)
 - (ii) Please drop the kits one hour before the last collection time to ensure that is not missed
 - (iii) Only use a Royal Mail priority post box. It will be labelled with the below sign Priority Box sign and one of the regional NHS logos. Please do not enter any Post Office with the kit.

Method 2: Collection of test kits

- (a) Courier collection is provided by e-Courier. Courier collection can be scheduled for each registered address using the e-Courier portal (<https://testkitcollect.co.uk/>). You can book courier collection for the following day or up to 6 days in advance using their portal <https://testkitcollect.co.uk/>. Next day collection must be booked by 5pm.
- (b) e-Courier will collect kits from 9am – 1pm. They will send confirmation to the registered email of any bookings. This courier will collect any test kits completed since the last collection.

4. Safety Procedures and Practical Considerations

4.1 General practice Accountabilities

In addition to the responsibilities of the general practice and/or medical professional described earlier in this guidance, it is the responsibility of the general practice:

- (a) To understand case definition of COVID-19 and government guidance
- (b) To follow guidance and standard operating procedures for general practice in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19). The latest version of this guidance is available on <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/managing-coronavirus-covid-19-in-general-practice-sop/>
- (c) To follow guidance on Infection prevention and control. Infection control precautions are to be maintained for all staff, at all times, for all patients; please refer to the latest national guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>. This includes videos and posters <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures> demonstrating correct procedures for donning and doffing personal protective equipment (PPE), <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance#guidance-for-non-clinical-settings>
- (d) To follow guidance on Clinical waste. Clinical waste should be disposed of as set out by the Health Technical Memorandum 07-01 on the management of healthcare waste <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-the-safe-management-of-healthcare-waste>
- (e) To follow guidance on PPE on <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/care/infection-control/ppe/>. Staff on sites are required to use and be provided with the appropriate PPE for their role. In addition, see 3.2.2, point f, for specific PPE guidance during test
- (f) To minimise potential risk of transmission to staff, patients and visitors at GP practices as advised in point b above
- (g) To provide specific training for those performing assisted testing. To provide resources educating them on how to effectively and safely carry out the swab tests provided.

5. Appendix

5.1 GP Self Administration testing instructions – see patient leaflet



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Introduction

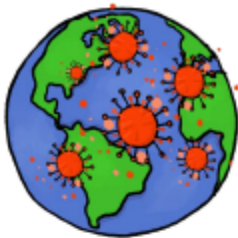


Department
of Health &
Social Care

This guide comes from the
Government's Department for
Health and Social Care.



This is an easy read guide to help
you understand the coronavirus
test.



Coronavirus is an illness that is
spreading around the world. It is
also called COVID-19.



We have a test for coronavirus. You
can do the test on yourself.



Coronavirus

You can have coronavirus and not feel sick.



Some people are very sick with it.



You may get a high temperature and a cough.



You might not be able to taste or smell things.

Taking the test



The test is very quick and it should not hurt.



Before you take the test, wash your hands with soap and water.



If you have a runny nose, you should blow your nose into a tissue before taking the test.

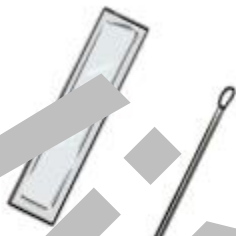


When you are ready, pick a clean, dry surface for the test kit. Unpack everything from the kit onto the clean surface.



You will take the test from your throat and nose using a swab.

A **swab** is like a large cotton bud.



Open the package and gently take out the swab.



You will use the same swab for both your throat and your nose



Do not let the tip of the swab touch anything except your throat and nose or it could mix up the results

N.B. For individuals who have had their tonsils removed, please ask them to swab where their tonsils were before they were removed.

Throat swab



Use the swab to take a sample from your throat.



Look inside your mouth and find your tonsils. Your tonsils are the soft part at the back of your throat.



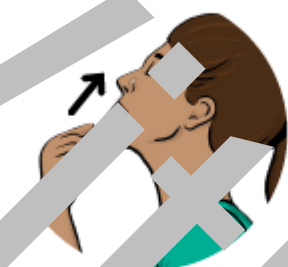
You need to open your mouth and stick out your tongue.



Gently rub the swab over the soft part at the back of your throat for 10 seconds.

You may gag, but it will not hurt. It may be a bit uncomfortable.

Nose swab



Use the same swab to take a sample from your nose.

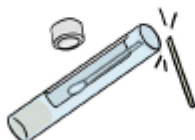
Put the swab into your nose and push it gently upwards. It should not hurt so stop pushing it up further if it starts to hurt.



Keep the swab in the nose for 10 to 15 seconds. This should not hurt but may be a bit uncomfortable.



Put the swab into the vial. A vial is a small plastic jar filled with a little liquid.



Snap off the end of the swab so that it fits into the vial without bending.



Screw the lid of the vial back on tightly.



That's it, well done. Now you need to pack up the test and giving it to the team member.

N.B. Please check the barcode number on the vial matches the barcode number on the biohazard bag.

Picking up your test



Place the vial into the zip-lock bag with the absorbent pad.

An absorbent pad is a small piece of soft fabric.



Place the zip-lock bag into the biohazard bag.

Then place the biohazard bag into the larger bag with the barcode on it.



Seal the bag using its zipper seal.



Give the biohazard bag to the staff member.

Getting your results



You will not be told the results straight away. The staff member will send your test off to the lab for testing.



You will have to wait for your test results. This might take up to 5 days.



The results will come back by email or text.



If you do not have coronavirus

If the test shows that you do not have coronavirus, you do not need to do anything.

N.B. Individuals will need to isolate for 10 days, rather than 14 days suggested below. This leaflet will be updated before being sent to surgeries.



If you do have coronavirus

If the test shows that you do have coronavirus, you must **isolate** for 14 days.



Isolate means:

- you must stay in your home



- you cannot go near other people



- you cannot go out

More information



If you have any questions about your coronavirus test please call:

- **119** if you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland
- **0300 30 2713** if you live in Scotland



If you feel worse, or you do not get better after 7 days

- Visit NHS 111 online at **www.111.nhs.uk**
- or call **111**

5.2 GP Assisted Administration testing instructions – see patient leaflet



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Introduction



This guide comes from the Government's Department for Health and Social Care.



This is an easy read guide to help you understand the coronavirus test.



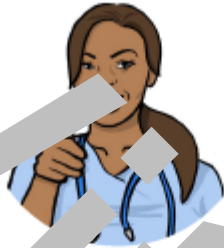
Coronavirus is a new illness that is spreading around the world. It is also called COVID-19.



We want to know if anyone has caught coronavirus.



We have a test for coronavirus. We want to test everyone who is showing symptoms.

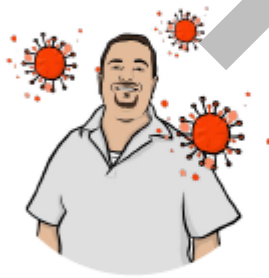


We want to:

- help you get better



- stop it spreading to other people



You can have coronavirus and not feel sick.



Some people are very sick with it.

You may get a high temperature and a cough.



You might not be able to taste or smell things.

Testing



The test is very quick. It takes about 10 to 15 seconds.



It shouldn't hurt, but you may feel a little uncomfortable.



We need to take a little bit of the liquid:

- from your throat at the back of your mouth



- from the back of your nose



A staff member from your doctors office will do the test on you.

The staff member will wear an apron, mask and gloves. This is to keep you safe.

Throat swab



The staff member will use a **swab** to take a **sample** from your throat.



A **swab** is like a large cotton bud.

A sample of the little bit of liquid that will go onto the swab.



You will need to sit up straight and lean your head back.



You need to open your mouth and stick out your tongue.



The staff member may use a torch to see into your mouth.

They may need to gently press down on your tongue so they can see.



You may have to say 'Ahhhhhhh' until the staff member says they are finished.



The staff member will gently rub the swab at the back of your mouth.

You may gag. It may not hurt, but you may feel a little uncomfortable.

Nose swab



The staff member will use a swab to take a sample from your nose.



If you have a runny nose, you should blow your nose with a tissue before the test.



You will need to sit straight and lean your head back.



The staff member will put the swab into your nose and push it gently upwards. It will not go too far up and it should not hurt.



The staff member will gently turn the swab. This should not hurt, but you may feel a little uncomfortable.



That's it. Well done, you've finished the test.

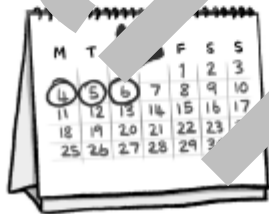


Sometimes it's hard to see the result from your test, if this happens you may need to get another test.

Getting your results



You will not know the results straight away. The staff member will put the swab into a tube and it will be sent off to the lab for testing.



You will have to wait for your test results. This might take up to 5 days.



The results will come back by email or text.



If you do not have coronavirus

If the test shows that you do not have coronavirus, you do not need to do anything.

N.B. Individuals will need to isolate for 10 days, rather than 14 days suggested below. This leaflet will be updated before being sent to surgeries.



If you do have Coronavirus

If the test shows that you do have Coronavirus, you must isolate for 14 days.



Isolate means:

- you must stay in your home



- you cannot go near other people



- you cannot go out

More information



If you have any questions about your coronavirus test please call:

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If you feel worse, or you do not get better after 7 days

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- or call **111**

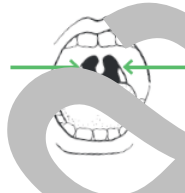
5.3 Taking a Sample from a Child

Preparing to take the sample

- **Talk through the steps** of the test. If possible, practice the steps without using any of the testing materials.
- **Remain calm and confident** as you go through the procedure. This will help the child stay calm too.
- It may be helpful to give them a distraction while you conduct the test (video), or make it into a game.
- If possible, you may wish to have **another adult involved to provide support** during the test. Decide before starting who will comfort the child and who will do the test.
- It may be helpful for another adult to **hold the child on their lap** during the procedure so it is easier to perform the test.
- Your **child may have some gagging or brief discomfort** when the swab touches their tonsils. This is normal for all age groups.
- If the child is old enough, **explaining the test in terms they can understand** might help ease any fear. For example, "You may want to push the swab away but it is really important you let me tickle your throat and nose so that we can tell if you might have coronavirus".
- **Play games and suggest they stick their tongue out** (and get them to copy you). Then have them say "ahhhh" loudly. Show them the swab stick and have them keep saying 'ahhhh' while you swab their tonsils.



Taking a sample from a child



- Follow the main instructions provided in your test kit**
These are extra instructions to help you. Use the main instruction set to see what to do before and after swabbing your child.
- Talk to your child**
Explain what you are going to do before you swab the tonsils and nose.
- Ask the child to blow their nose into a tissue**
This is to get rid of excess mucus. Take this tissue home with you and put it in the bin.
- First find their tonsils (back of the throat)**
Look inside the child's mouth and find their tonsils. This is the area where you will take the swab sample. It may be helpful to use the torch on your phone to help you to find the tonsils.
If you cannot swab their tonsils, you can swab both of their nostrils instead. The result may not be as accurate as a nose and throat swab.



5

How to take the throat sample

Holding the swab in your hand, have the child open their mouth wide and tilt their head back. Gently rub the swab over both tonsils and the back of the throat for 10 seconds (use the torch on your phone to help you to see what you are doing).

Remove the swab from the back of the throat.



6

How to take the nose sample

Put the same end of the same swab gently into one of their nostrils until you feel some resistance.

Rotate the swab for 10-15 seconds and slowly remove it.

If you did not swab the tonsils, swab both nostrils for 10 - 15 seconds.



7

Place swab into plastic vial

Make sure the fabric tip is facing down as you place it into the vial. Snap off the stick end, so the tip is inside the vial without bending.

8

Go back to the main instructions for how to package the test kit

Each test kit comes with four unique identical barcodes for a named person.

Please follow the main instructions which explain how these labels must be used.

Thank your child for their help

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