HM Government

NHS

Pooled testing for coronavirus (COVID-19)

These instructions are for pooled testing.

**It tests if you (and others in the pool) currently have coronavirus**

These instructions are for universities that are carrying out pooled testing with those aged 18 years and above. Pooled testing is a way of testing up to 5 people for coronavirus at the same time.

A university testing lead will be responsible for overseeing testing in your university. If you have any questions or concerns about the pooled testing process, please contact them in the first instance.

Important

- Before you start testing make sure you are able to return the completed pooled test kit so it can be sent to the lab on the same day the test is taken.

- Register the completed pooled test on the same day the swabs are taken. If completed tests have not been registered, then results cannot be sent.

- Do not pooled test anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, they should have an individual swab test immediately.

- Anyone who has previously tested positive should not use pooled testing. If new possible COVID-19 symptoms develop, the person should have an individual swab test immediately.
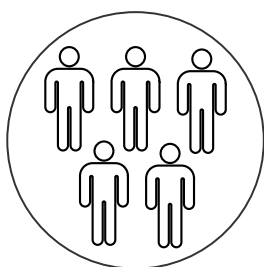
How pooled testing works (for university students)
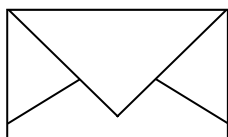
① Collect pooled test kit

Your university will organise a collection point where you'll be able to pick up pooled test kits.

Check where and when you need to drop off the completed pooled test kit. It's important to plan ahead, as you'll need to be able to do the test and return it on the same day.

② Prepare

You can swab up to 5 individuals with one pooled test kit and submit each sample within one pooled test kit. If there are more than 5 people in your household, use multiple pooled test kits to create pools. (For example a household of 8 people could have a pool of 5 swabs and a pool of 3 swabs.). Make sure everyone in your testing pool is comfortable with the swabbing procedure.

Agree a time when everyone in your testing pool is available to take their swab at the same time.

Once you've done the test, you must return it to the collection point on the day of testing otherwise results will not be sent.

Designate one person to be the lead. This person will be responsible for overseeing the test, as well as recording key information to be shared with the university. This information will include the barcode number and time of the test. Additionally, your university may request that you share additional personal details required by NHS Test and Trace to register the pooled test. Return this information along with the completed pooled test kit.
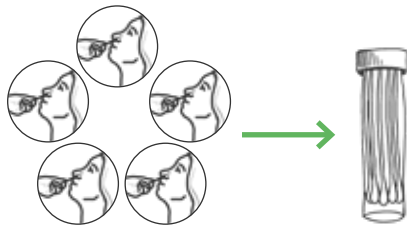

You must not use pooled testing for anyone who:

Has coronavirus symptoms.
They should have an individual swab test immediately.

OR

Has ever had a positive test result.
If you develop new possible coronavirus symptoms after you tested positive, you should be retested immediately using an individual swab test, not as part of a pooled test.

❸ Collect samples

Each person will need to do the test themselves.

Follow the step by step instructions to make sure the samples are collected and put into **one plastic tube** safely.

The test lead in the pool should note down the barcode of the pooled test kit and other information required for registration of everyone in the pool. This information will be used by admin staff to register the pooled test kit and process results.

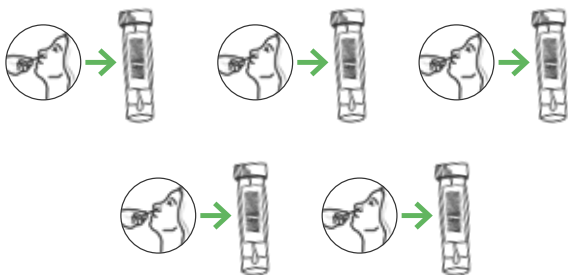## ❹ Return completed pooled test kit

The pool lead should drop off the completed pooled test kit at the university's designated location.
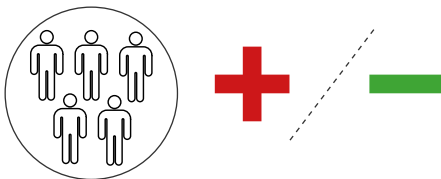
❺ Get results

Results are communicated to each student individually. The result you receive will be for the whole pool, not for each individual.
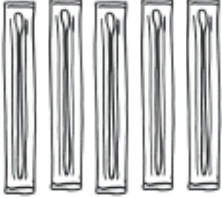
❻ Follow up

If your pooled test result is negative, you do not need to do anything else.

If your pooled test result is positive, each person in the pool will need to be retested individually and self isolate immediately. (See page 9.) Notify your university of the result following your university's policies

You and everyone in your pool should arrange for an urgent appointment via **NHS Testing Facilities: www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test**

What each pooled test kit contains

Important: **Your plastic tube, biohazard bag and box should have pre-affixed barcode labels**. If any barcodes are missing, or they do not match each other, contact your university testing lead.

- [ ] 5 swabs, each inside a sealed wrapper
- [ ] Plastic tube, containing a small amount of liquid. **The liquid must stay in the tube.**
- [ ] Absorbent pad
- [ ] Zip-lock bag

- [ ] Biohazard bag wtih a silver seal
- [ ] Spare barcode
- [ ] Individual return box
- [ ] Security seal to close box

Something damaged/broken/missing in the pooled test kit?

If you notice anything damaged, broken, missing or difficult to use in the kit, do not use it. Contact your university testing admin team and request a new kit.

How to test yourself for COVID-19

Before you start

- Check when and where you need to return the test. Make sure you can drop off the completed pooled test kits at the university's designated drop off point on the same day as the test was taken.

- Familiarise yourself with the contents of the pooled test kit and make sure everyone in your testing pool is comfortable with the swabbing procedure.

- **If you have coronavirus symptoms or tested positive at any time in the past, you should book an individual test immediately. Do not use pooled testing.**

- Your pool lead should make sure that everyone in your testing pool is ready, and that everything is in place to start swabbing. You should put the plastic tube in a communal area such as a kitchen or bathroom. Put it on a clean surface or inside a clean container, for example a washed plastic container. Everyone in the pool should take an individually wrapped swab.

- Your swab sample should be taken in your own room or bathroom, by yourself, with the door closed. Make sure you have a clean surface or container available in the testing location to allow you to place the swab down after testing to wash your wands.

Taking the sample

1

Gently blow your nose into a tissue.
This is so excess mucus does not spoil the test.
Throw the tissue away in a closed bin.

2

Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds using soap and warm water, or sanitise your hands.
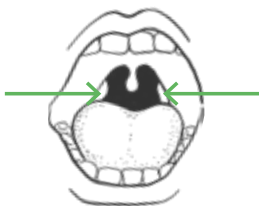
3

Look inside your mouth, and find your tonsils at the back of the throat.

You can use a mirror to help. Your tonsils (or where they would have been if they're removed) are where you'll swab your sample.

If you have any questions please contact your university.

4

Tear open the wrapper and remove the swab.

Make sure you keep hold of the wrapper, you'll need it in step 7.

Important

The fabric tip of the swab must not touch anything apart from the tonsils, back of throat and nose. If it touches anything else, you'll need to ask for a new swab.

Taking the samples may cause you to gag or have minor discomfort, but it should not hurt. If you feel resistance or pain, do not insert the swab any deeper.
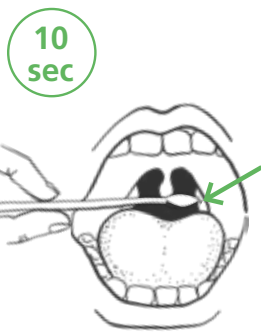
---

10 sec

5

Take the throat sample.

Open your mouth wide and gently rub the fabric tip of the swab over both tonsils at the back of your throat (or where they would have been), rotating as you do so. Do this for **10 seconds**. Try not to touch your tongue, teeth, cheeks, gums, or any other surfaces with the tip of the swab.

---

10 sec

This line is 2.5cm or 1 inch long

6

Take the nose sample.

Put the same end of the **same swab** gently into one nostril up to 2.5cm or 1 inch up your nose. **It may cause mild discomfort, but it should not hurt. If you feel resistance or pain, do not insert the swab any deeper.**

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

You only need to sample one nostril.
If you have a nose piercing use the other nostril.

7

Put swab back into its wrapper

Make sure the swab does not touch any other surface. Put the swab in the wrapper and put it on a clean surface or in a container before moving on to step 8.
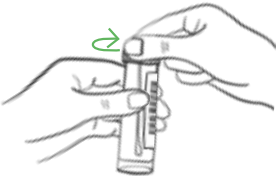
If you have any questions please contact your university.

8

Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds using soap and warm water, or sanitise your hands.

9

Carry the swab to the communal area where the plastic tube is located, making sure that it remains inside its wrapper at all times.

10

You and the other members of your pool should take it in turns to place your swabs in the plastic tube.

To do this, remove the swab from its wrapper and snap off the unused end at the breakpoint in the middle of the swab. Be careful not to touch the fabric end of the swab as you do this.

Put the swab into the plastic tube. Make sure the fabric tip is facing down as you do this. Securely screw the lid onto the plastic tube so no liquid can leak after each swab.

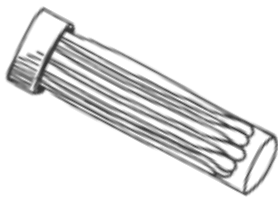Dispose of the discarded end of the swab and wrapper in a closed bin.

11

Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds using soap and warm water, or sanitise your hands.

Repeat steps **1** to **11** for each member of the pool until all the swabs are inside the plastic tube.

12

Once you and the other members of your pool have put all of your swabs into the plastic tube, your pool lead should securely screw on the lid so that no liquid can leak before washing their hands. You may need to apply pressure to get the lid on.

13

Before packaging the plastic tube in the box, **make sure the barcode numbers on the tube, biohazard bag and UN3373 box match.**

If you have any questions please contact your university.
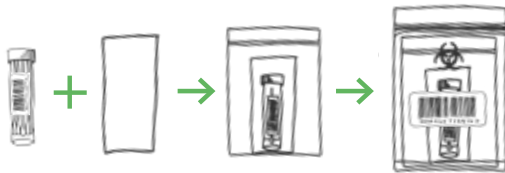
14

The pool lead should put the closed plastic tube into the zip-lock bag with the absorbent pad. Then put the zip-lock bag with plastic tube into the biohazard bag and seal using the silver seal.

15

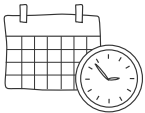**Package the completed pooled test kit in the UN3373 box provided.**
Clean the container and/or area where you kept the plastic tube with sanitiser.

16

The pooled test lead should note down the following information:

- **The barcode number of the pooled test kit**

- **Date and time of the pooled test**

Additionally, the following personal details are required to register the pooled test kit with NHS Track and Trace. Depending on the guidance issued by your university, you may be required to share any or all of the following for each student taking part in the pooled test:

- Name

- Date of birth

- Gender

- Ethnic group

- Address, including current postcode and country

- NHS number, if known

- Email address and mobile number for their test results to be sent to

Each student may also want to keep a note of the barcode number for their records.

Following instructions from the university, the pooled test lead should provide the barcode number of the pooled test kit as well as the information for each individual in the pooled test.

This information will be used by admin staff to register the pooled test kit.

University test drop-off point

17

Take the return box to your university's designated drop off point on the same day as testing.

If you have any questions please contact your university.

Getting results

Test results will be sent to students within 5 days of pooled test kits arriving at the lab. If you don't receive results, contact your university testing lead quoting your barcode number as reference. Refer to your university's consent policy on Covid-19 testing and processing of results. Speak to you university testing lead if you have any questions or concerns.

Test results for pooled testing show a single positive, negative or unclear for each pool. That means all the individuals within each pool will have the same test result.

If the pooled test is negative

No further action required.

If the pooled test is unclear

Everyone in the pool will need to retest as individuals at their nearest Local Test Site, Regional Test Site, or with a home test kit ordered via gov.uk. You don't need to self-isolate while you do an individual test and wait for the result.

If the pooled test result is positive

All individuals within that pool should self-isolate immediately, see guidance on what to do when you get your test result.

Everyone in the pool will need to arrange for an urgent appointment via NHS Testing Facilities: **www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test**

When applying for individual tests via this link, **you'll need to state that you do have symptoms** (even though you may not) in order to be eligible. Attending a local test site may be faster to test than applying for a home test kit.

For more advice on what to do when you receive your test results visit:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/what-your-test-result-means/

Download the NHS COVID-19 App at: **covid19.nhs.uk/**

Missing results?

If you do not get your results, contact your university testing lead quoting your barcode number as reference. Refer to your university's consent policy on Covid-19 testing and processing of results. Speak to you university testing lead if you have any questions or concerns.

If you have any questions please contact your university.

If you have coronavirus

If you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and your condition gets worse, or you do not get better after 7 days, use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service, **111.nhs.uk**. If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

Do not delay getting help if you are worried. Trust your instincts.