

Workplace COVID-19 Testing

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Overview

With around one in three people with COVID-19 displaying no symptoms, the Government is encouraging everyone to take a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test twice a week, in order to identify asymptomatic cases, reduce the spread of infection, and pave the way for society to reopen.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is providing support for asymptomatic LFD testing in England. Different approaches are being taken in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

Testing can potentially give a false sense of security to workers receiving negative results, and a testing regime does not replace the need to maintain current social distancing requirements or compliance with the [Site Operating Procedures](#).

What is workplace testing?

The Government's COVID-19 workplace testing programme supports businesses with workers who cannot work from home to undertake LFD testing.

Tests are currently being provided **free of charge** by NHS Test and Trace, and the Government has confirmed that businesses that registered for workplace testing by 12 April can continue to order tests until **19 July 2021**.

Businesses with 10 or more employees that cannot set up a test site in the workplace are able to order home test kits for their employees.

Companies and sites cannot mandate COVID-19 testing for workers.

What is the Community Testing Programme?

Businesses that are unable to offer workplace testing can use the [Community Testing Programme](#) in their local area, which will provide a fixed and/or mobile test site depending on the local authority.

To take part in community testing, a company or individual can **use the [postcode checker](#) or visit their local authority website and search 'LFD testing' to find their nearest test site.**

What are Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests?

LFD tests require a throat and nasal swab which is tested for COVID-19 in the same location as the test is undertaken, with results available in 20 to 30 minutes. LFD tests perform most effectively when levels of the virus are at their highest, helping to detect people when they are most infectious.

LFDs have high 'specificity' and **only a very small proportion of people who do not have COVID-19 will receive a positive result** (known as a false positive). This is about three in every 1,000 tests. They are therefore well-suited to frequent testing of large numbers of asymptomatic people.

How are tests undertaken?

Under the current workplace testing programme, it is recommended that **workers who cannot work from home are tested twice a week**. LFD tests do **not** need to be carried out by a trained clinician; however, staff overseeing the tests must be self-certified via the online training provided by DHSC, which must be refreshed every three months. Staff must wear appropriate PPE, such as surgical face masks, eye protection, disposable aprons and disposable gloves.

Individuals must sign a consent form prior to any tests being undertaken. They then [register each test online](#) prior to taking it. Once the test has been taken, the individual should wait in a designated area for it to be processed. The test and result is also registered by the member of staff overseeing the test on a different [log test website](#).

The testing area must be cleaned between each use. Each LFD test comes with a small waste bag and the test should be placed into this bag after use. All waste can then be disposed of via municipal waste collection.

Any workers that have tested positive for COVID-19 following a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test are exempt from routine LFD testing for 90 days from the date of the test, unless they develop new COVID-19 symptoms.

How are test results given?

Once the test has been processed, the individual can be notified verbally of their result by the member of staff overseeing the test. The individual will then receive confirmation via email and/or text message within a day of the test. The individual's employer will only be notified of the result if the individual has provided their consent; however, an individual has to inform their employer in the event of a positive result.

Any worker who receives a positive LFD test result must self-isolate immediately and [get a PCR test](#) as soon as possible (within two days) to confirm the result. Further information on the steps to take in the event of a positive PCR result can be found in the [Build UK flowchart](#).

In the event that the LFD test result is invalid, the individual should be retested as soon as possible. If that result is also invalid, then they must [get a PCR test](#).

Under the current workplace testing programme, test results are not transferrable and workers visiting different sites in the same week may get tested more often.



What is required for a test site?

A test site should have the following:

- A clean, ventilated reception and/or results waiting area that enable current social distancing requirements to be maintained
- A clean, ventilated testing area at least 2.4 metres in height which enables current social distancing requirements to be maintained
- Mains or generator power supply and reliable internet connection
- Access to washroom facilities, changing rooms and hand hygiene facilities (soap and water/appropriate hand sanitiser)
- One-way systems to manage the flow of people
- Disposal facilities for waste.

The space required for testing may reduce the amount of space in other areas of the site, and **it is important to make sure there is no impact on the ability to maintain current social distancing requirements.**

What if a worker refuses to be tested?

Companies and sites **cannot** mandate COVID-19 testing for workers.

Positive engagement is key and companies should make every effort to encourage workers to take part in LFD testing by explaining why it is being introduced, what the benefits are, and how tests will be carried out. DHSC has produced a [short film](#) which might be helpful.

There are differing views on whether a company would be able to justify having a mandatory testing policy and refusing entry to site in the event that a worker does not consent to being tested and it would depend entirely on the circumstances. In this situation, a company should seek its own independent professional advice.

Next steps

1. Identify a space for the test site and set up according to the Guidebook.
2. Ensure there are sufficient staff to undertake the testing process and then organise training by [emailing DHSC](#) for access to the online training platform.
3. Sign DHSC terms and conditions for COVID-19 testing.
4. Register the test site and staff who have successfully completed the DHSC online training on the Government's [test site portal](#).
5. Order LFD tests [online](#).
6. Produce a documented risk assessment or protocol for carrying out testing.
7. Inform workers and the supply chain that LFD testing is being introduced and how the process will work on site.
8. Get workers to sign the consent form to participate in testing.
9. Get workers to sign a privacy notice in order for their results to be shared with the company (*this is voluntary and a worker is not required to sign it*).
10. A company is now ready to start testing workers.

Further information

- [An Introduction to Rapid Lateral Flow Testing - Short Film](#)
- [Understanding lateral flow antigen testing for people without symptoms](#)
- [Privacy information for NHS Test and Trace virus testing](#)

This publication is issued by Build UK Group Limited ("Build UK") to give general guidance only on workplace testing. The information is based on the following publications and you should always ensure you are following the latest versions on the online portal:

- *LFT Asymptomatic Testing Guidebook – Version 4.5*
- *Workplace Collect Asymptomatic Testing Guidebook – Version 4.5*
- *Clinical Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Mass Testing with Lateral Flow Antigen Testing Devices – Workplace Asymptomatic Test Site – Version 3.4.*

If you require guidance on a specific issue, you should contact the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) or seek your own independent professional advice.

www.BuildUK.org