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1. Home (https://www.gov.uk/)
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3. Testing for coronavirus (COVID-19) (https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-taxon/testing)

Guidance

Surge testing for new coronavirus (COVID-19) variants

How 'surge testing' and genomic sequencing are being used in locations in England where COVID-19 variants have been identified.

From:
> Department of Health and Social Care (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care)

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Contents

‣ What surge testing is
‣ Why the government is using surge testing
‣ Locations using surge testing
‣ Who should get a test
‣ Who should not get a test
‣ How to get a test
‣ What happens after your test
‣ If you have coronavirus symptoms
‣ Continue to follow national lockdown rules

Print this page

What surge testing is

Surge testing is increased testing (including door-to-door testing in some areas) and enhanced contact tracing in specific locations in England.

It involves testing of people who do not have any symptoms of coronavirus.

Surge testing started on Monday 1 February.

Genomic sequencing means analysing the virus sample to understand how it compares with other cases.

Why the government is using surge testing

Extensive surveillance of coronavirus has identified a number of cases of COVID-19 variants and mutations of concern in England.

The government is using surge testing and genomic sequencing to:

- monitor and suppress the spread of coronavirus
- better understand new variants

Read more about surge testing being deployed in England to monitor and suppress the spread of the COVID-19 variant (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/surge-testing-to-be-deployed-to-monitor-and-suppress-spread-of-covid-19-variant).

See latest numbers of confirmed cases of COVID-19 variants of concern and variants under investigation (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-variants-genomically-confirmed-case-numbers), published by Public Health England.

Locations using surge testing

Surge testing is currently being carried out in specific and targeted locations within the following local authority areas:

London

- London Borough of Barnet (specific areas within N3 postcode)
- London Borough of Hillingdon (specific areas within UB3 postcode)
- London Borough of Lambeth (borough wide)
- London Borough of Southwark (specific area within SE16 postcode)
- London Borough of Wandsworth (borough wide)

West Midlands

- Birmingham City Council (Sandwell and Ladywood, Jewellery Quarter and Soho wards)
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (B66 3, B66 4 and B67 6)

The list is updated regularly.

If your local authority is carrying out surge testing, you can visit your local authority website (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) to find out exactly where testing is being targeted.

Locations that have completed surge testing

The following areas have completed initial surge testing operations:

- Birmingham City Council (specific areas in and near to the B31 postcode)
- Bolton Council (area of Wingates Industrial Estate within BL5 postcode)
- Bristol City Council (specific areas in the following postcodes: BS1, BS2, BS3, BS4, BS5, BS6, BS8, BS9, BS14 and BS16)
- Buckinghamshire Council (specific areas in the HP10 postcode)
- Essex County Council (CM13 postcode area)
- Hampshire County Council (specific areas in the RG26 postcode)
- Hertfordshire County Council (EN10)
- Kent County Council (ME15)
- Leeds City Council (specific areas within the LS8 and LS9 postcodes)
- London Borough of Barnet (specific areas within N2, N10 and NW4)
- London Borough of Brent (specific areas within North Wembley)
- London Borough of Croydon (specific areas within the CR0 postcode, and specific areas within South Norwood and Thornton Heath)
- London Borough of Ealing (specific areas in and near to the W7 postcode)*
- London Borough of Haringey (N17 and specific areas within N10 and N11)
- London Borough of Harrow, North Harrow, South Harrow and Wealdstone (specific areas within the HA2 and HA3 postcodes)
- London Borough of Lambeth (specific areas in the SW8, SW9, SE27 and SW16 postcodes)
- London Borough of Merton (Pollards Hill and Wimbledon Park area)
- London Borough of Redbridge (Loxford and Clementswood wards)
- London Borough of Southwark (specific area within the SE5 postcode)
- London Borough of Wandsworth (specific areas within the SW11 and SW15 postcodes)
- Manchester City Council (specific areas in the M9, M14, M15, M16 and M40 postcodes)
- Metropolitan Borough of Sefton (Norwood, Dukes and Cambridge wards)
- Middlesbrough Council (specific areas in the TS7 and TS8 postcodes)
- Norfolk County Council (specific areas in IP22)
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (specific areas within the DY4 7, DY4 8 and B69 2 postcodes)
- Southampton City Council (specific areas in the SO15 postcode)
- South Gloucestershire Council (within the following postcodes: BS32 0, BS32 8, BS32 9, BS34 5, BS34 6 and specific areas in the following postcodes: BS16 and BS37)
- Staffordshire County Council (Stafford District)
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (specific areas within TS19)
- Surrey County Council (GU21, GU22 and TW20)
- Walsall Council (specific areas in and near to the WS2 postcode and Pleck ward)
- Worcestershire County Council (specific areas in and near to the WR3 postcode)

*Additional testing and genomic sequencing was deployed more widely within the London Borough of Ealing, where a small number of additional cases of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa have been found.

Further data on surge testing will be provided in due course.

Who should get a test

You should get a test for coronavirus if you:

- live in targeted locations within one of the postcode areas listed on this page
- are aged 16 years or over

You should get a test even if:

- you have no symptoms of coronavirus
- you've had a vaccination for coronavirus
- you've tested positive for coronavirus previously (but not within the last 90 days)

> If you've recently spent time within one of the areas targeted for surge testing but do not live there, you should continue to follow the national restrictions (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home) and check with your local authority whether you should get a test.

Who should not get a test

If you have tested positive within the last 90 days, you do not need to be tested.

How to get a test

Local authorities in the postcode areas on this page are providing PCR testing to people without symptoms through extra:

- home testing kits
- mobile testing sites

Visit your local authority website (https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) to find out more.

What happens after your test

If you test positive with a PCR test, your test will be sent to a laboratory for genomic sequencing.

You must isolate with your household and follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus infections (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection). Public Health England will carry out enhanced tracing of close contacts of confirmed cases of the variant.

There is currently no evidence that variants cause more severe illness.

Positive PCR tests from institutions within these specific locations, such as care homes, will also be sent for genomic sequencing.

If you test negative you should continue to follow the national lockdown rules (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home).

If you have coronavirus symptoms

If you have coronavirus symptoms, it is important that you get a test for people with symptoms (https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) online, via the NHS COVID-19 app or by calling 119.

You must isolate with your household and follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus infections (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) until you get your result.

Continue to follow national lockdown rules

If you live within one of the postcode areas on this page, the same national restrictions (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home) still apply.

You should continue to work from home.

You should also practise 'hands, face, space, fresh air'.

If you live in an area deploying surge testing you should get tested.

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1. 16 April 2021
   Updated to include Birmingham City Council (Sandwell and Ladywood, Jewellery Quarter and Soho wards) and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (B66 3, B66 4 and B67 6) in the locations using surge testing, and to reflect that London Borough of Harrow, South Harrow (specific areas within HA2 postcode) has completed surge testing.
2. 15 April 2021
   Updated to include London Borough of Barnet (specific areas within N3 postcode) in the locations using surge testing, and to reflect that Bolton Council (area of Wingates Industrial Estate within BL5 postcode) has completed surge testing.
3. 14 April 2021
   Updated to include specific areas in the London boroughs of Hillingdon and Southwark and the whole boroughs of Lambeth and Wandsworth.
4. 1 April 2021
   Updated to reflect that the London Borough of Haringey (specific areas within N10 and N11), the London Borough of Harrow, North Harrow and Wealdstone (specific areas within the HA2 and HA3 postcodes), Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (specific areas within the DY4 7, DY4 8 and B69 2 postcodes) and Staffordshire County Council (Stafford District) have completed surge testing.
5. 30 March 2021

Updated to include Bolton Council (area of Wingates Industrial Estate in the BL5 postcode) in the locations using surge testing, and to reflect that the London Borough of Southwark (specific area in SE5) and London Borough of Wandsworth (specific areas in SW11 and SW15) have completed surge testing.

6. 23 March 2021

Updated to include N11 in the London Borough of Haringey in the locations using surge testing, and reflect that specific areas within N2 and NW4 in the London Borough of Barnet, and specific areas within North Wembley in the London Borough of Brent, have completed surge testing.

7. 18 March 2021

Updated to reflect that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (specific areas within TS19) has completed surge testing.

8. 17 March 2021

Section on 'locations using surge testing' updated to include specific areas within N10 for London Borough of Haringey and London Borough of Barnet.

9. 16 March 2021

Updated to include Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (specific areas within the DY4 7, DY4 8 and B69 2 postcodes).

10. 15 March 2021

Updated to include the London Borough of Harrow (specific areas within the HA2 and HA3 postcodes), the London Borough of Southwark (specific location within the SE5 postcode) and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (specific areas within TS19), and reflect that the London Borough of Lambeth (specific areas in the SW8 and SW9 postcodes) and South Gloucestershire Council (within postcodes BS32 0, BS32 8, BS32 9, BS34 5 and BS34 6) have completed surge testing.

11. 11 March 2021

Updated to include the London Borough of Wandsworth (specific areas within the SW11 and SW15 postcodes), and to reflect that the London Borough of Croydon (specific areas within the CR0 postcode, and specific areas within South Norwood and Thornton Heath) and the London Borough of Redbridge (Loxford and Clementswood wards) have completed surge testing.

12. 8 March 2021

Updated to include the London Borough of Brent (specific areas within North Wembley) and specific areas within South Norwood and Thornton Heath in the London Borough of Croydon, and reflect that the Wimbledon Park area in the London Borough of Merton has completed surge testing.

13. 4 March 2021

Updated to reflect that Essex County Council (CM13 postcode area) and Norfolk County Council (specific areas in IP22) have completed surge testing.

14. 3 March 2021

Updated to reflect that Manchester City Council (areas in M9 and M40) have completed surge testing.

15. 2 March 2021

Updated to include London Borough of Redbridge (Loxford and Clementswood wards).

16. 2 March 2021

Updated to include specific areas in the London Borough of Barnet, London Borough of Merton, and South Gloucestershire Council, and reflect that specific areas in Buckinghamshire Council and Leeds City Council have completed surge testing.

17. 26 February 2021

Updated to reflect that Manchester City Council (areas in M14, M15 and M16), Middlesbrough Council (areas in TS7 and TS8) and Walsall Council (Pleck ward) have completed surge testing.

18. 25 February 2021

    Updated to include London Borough of Lambeth (areas in SW8 and SW9) and Buckinghamshire Council areas in HP10); to reflect that Bristol City Council (areas in BS1, BS2, BS3, BS4, BS5, BS6, BS8, BS9, BS14 and BS16), London Borough of Ealing areas in and near W7), London Borough of Lambeth (areas in SE27 and SW16) and South Gloucestershire Council (areas in BS16 and BS37) have completed surge testing; and to note that the London Borough of Ealing is to get further testing as additional cases of the variant first identified in South Africa have been found there.

19. 23 February 2021

    Updated to include Essex County Council (CM13) and London Borough of Croydon (areas in CR0), and to reflect that Birmingham City Council (areas in and near to the B31), Hampshire County Council (areas in RG26 postcode), Metropolitan Borough of Sefton (Dukes and Cambridge wards), Surrey County Council (GU22), Southampton City Council (areas SO15) and Worcestershire County Council (specific areas in and near to the WR3 postcode) have completed surge testing.

20. 19 February 2021

    Updated to include Norfolk County Council (areas in IP22), Metropolitan Borough of Sefton (Dukes and Cambridge wards), Southampton City Council (areas in SO15), Surrey City Council (areas in SO15), Walsall (Pleck ward) and Leeds City Council (areas in LS8 and LS9), and to reflect that Metropolitan Borough of Sefton (Norwood), London Borough of Haringey (N17), London Borough of Merton (Pollards Hill) and Walsall Council (in and near to the WS2) have completed surge testing.

21. 13 February 2021

    The Middlesborough entry amended to add a postcode area, to read: 'within parts of the TS7 and TS8 areas of Middlesbrough'

22. 13 February 2021

    Updated to include Hampshire County Council and Middlesborough Council, and to reflect that Kent (ME15), Surrey (GU21 and TW20) and Hertfordshire (EN10) County Councils have completed surge testing.

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