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Guidance

COVID-19 home test: step-by-step guide (adults and children)

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This is a swab test to check if you have coronavirus (COVID-19) now.

Before you start

- Read these instructions before you open the test kit
- Wash your hands for 20 seconds before you handle the test kit
- If more than one person in your home is taking the COVID-19 test, please make sure you have a test kit for each person. You will need to register each person's test kit

Checklist: what you need to do

It's very important that you follow these steps in the correct order.

1. Find your nearest Royal Mail priority postbox (5 to 10 mins). Do this before you take the swab test
2. Register test kit online (10 to 15 minutes). You must register to get your test results
3. Take swab sample (5 to 10 minutes)
4. Post your completed test kit. You must do this within 2 days of receiving your test kit, if possible
5. Get test results by text and email (2 days)

Who can take the test

The test is suitable for the following people:

- adults aged 18 and over: self-test (unless unable to do so)
- teenagers aged 12 to 17: self-test with adult supervision
- children 11 and under: adult to test (see instructions on how to test a child)

Coronavirus guidance and help

If you have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or have contracted coronavirus (COVID-19), please refer to NHS COVID-19 guidance (<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19>).

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 (<http://www.111.nhs.uk/>). If you do not have internet access, call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.

1. Find your nearest priority postbox

Before you take your sample or register your kit, check collection times at your nearest Royal Mail priority postbox

You need to post your completed test kit no later than 1 hour before last collection.

Weekend collection times may differ from weekdays. Do not take your test on a bank holiday, take it on the following day instead, so it can be collected on time.

To check collection times at your nearest Royal Mail priority postbox:

1. Go to Royal Mail: services near you (<http://www.royalmail.com/services-near-you>)

2. Click the 'Show my nearest priority postboxes' tickbox
3. Enter the postcode of where you're staying and select the address
4. View priority postboxes near you and check the collection times

If you're unable to get to a priority postbox

If you're unable to get to a priority postbox without using public transport, or unable to follow the government's social distancing guidelines, are shielding, classed as vulnerable, or too unwell to leave your home, call us for guidance on when to take your test and how to book a courier collection:

- England, Wales and Northern Ireland: call 119 (free from mobiles and landlines)
- Scotland: call 0300 303 2713 (charged at your standard network rate). Lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm

2. Register your test kit online

Only register your kit just before you take your test.

If you're testing more than one person in your household, you must register each person's kit online.

Anyone who does not register will not receive their test results.

Register your test kit online (<http://www.gov.uk/register-home-test>)

You'll need:

- your 10-digit order ID (see your home test order confirmation email)
- your 11-character test kit barcode. Check this barcode is the same on your plastic tube, biohazard bag, and return box
- the 13-character Royal Mail barcode on the prepaid return label. Enter numbers and letters only and not the # hashtag symbol

Example of test kit barcode reference: AAA12356789

Example of Royal Mail barcode reference: ZD 1235 6789 1GB

3. Take swab sample

When to take your swab sample

You can take your swab sample after you've checked the collection times of your nearest priority postbox and registered your test kit online.

Take the swab sample on the same day you'll post it.

Tips for taking your test

Taking the test will feel a little uncomfortable and unusual for most people.

Remain calm and confident as you go through the process. If possible, do a mock practice without using any of the testing materials.

How to take a coronavirus self-test swab



This is for home test kits in the UK. Exact models may vary.

How to test someone else

If you're testing a child, see the instructions at the end of this document.

Prepare to take the sample

- Talk through the steps together. If possible, do a mock practice without using any of the testing materials.
- Remain calm and confident as you go through the process. This will help the person to stay calm too.

Take the sample

- Talk them through what you're going to do for both the tonsils and nose sample.
- Get them to say 'ahhhhhhhhhh' loudly for 5 seconds, so that you can have a view of their tonsils at the back of their throat.
- Get them to say 'ahhh' loudly 3 times, then introduce the swab stick and ask them to keep saying 'ahhh', while you take the swab sample.

How to take your swab sample

Step 1

Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds using soap and warm water before handling the test kit to avoid contaminating it.

Step 2

Clean and dry a surface and then place the home test kit items on it.

Step 3

Use the test kit checklist to make sure you have everything. Test kit contents:

- swab, inside sealed wrapper
- plastic tube, containing a small amount of liquid. The liquid must stay in the vial
- white absorbent pad
- zip-lock bag
- biohazard bag with silver seal
- return box with pre-paid Royal Mail return label
- security seal, for the return box

If you notice anything damaged, broken, missing or difficult to use in the kit, do not use it

Call your local number and request a new kit if something is broken, damaged, missing or difficult to use:

- England, Wales and Northern Ireland: call 119 (free from mobiles and landlines)
- Scotland: call 0300 303 2713 (charged at your standard network rate)

Step 4

Look inside the mouth and find the tonsils at the back of the throat. Tonsils or where they would have been (if they are removed) are where you'll swab the sample.

If you're performing this on yourself use a mirror to help. If you are doing this for someone else, use a torch to help.

Step 5

Gently blow your/their nose and cough into a tissue. This is so that excess mucus does not interfere with the test.

Throw the tissue away in a closed bin.

Step 6

Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds using soap and warm water before handling the test kit to avoid contaminating it.

Step 7

Open the package and gently take out the swab. This will be used for both tonsils and nose.

Do not touch your tongue, teeth, cheeks, gums, or any other surfaces with the fabric tip of the swab. If it touches anything else, it may spoil your sample.

Taking the sample may cause gagging and minor discomfort, but it should not hurt.

Step 8

Holding the swab in your hand, open the mouth wide and gently rub the swab's fabric tip over both tonsils at the back of the throat for 10 seconds (use a torch and/or mirror to help you do this).

Remove the swab from the back of the throat.

Step 9

Put the same end of the same swab gently into the nostril about 2.5cm (1 inch) or until you feel some resistance. Rotate the swab for 10 to 15 seconds and slowly remove it.

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

This may feel uncomfortable. Do not insert the swab any deeper if you or they feel strong resistance or pain.

Step 10

Put the swab into the vial with the fabric tip facing down. Snap off the stick end, so that it fits inside without bending.

Securely screw the lip onto the vial so that no liquid can leak.

You must keep the liquid in the vial. You may need to apply pressure to get the lid on.

Step 11

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

Step 12

1. First place the absorbent pad into the zip-lock bag
2. Then place the vial next to the absorbent pad in the same bag
3. Seal the bag

Step 13

Place the zip-lock bag into the biohazard bag. Make sure the barcodes on the plastic vial and the biohazard bag match. Seal the bag using its silver seal.

Step 14

1. Assemble the return box, following the instructions on the box. If you can, wipe down the bag and box with an antiseptic wipe
2. Put the biohazard bag into the box and close the box
3. Apply the security seal as directed

Step 15

Take a picture or note of the barcode on your Royal Mail return label, so you can track the delivery. You're now ready to post your test kit.

If you've been harmed or had a reaction while using this kit

England or Wales

If you're in England or Wales, report it on the Coronavirus Yellow Card reporting site (<https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/>). Only use this website to report injuries and reactions.

Northern Ireland

If you're in Northern Ireland, report it using the forms on the Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre website (<http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/reporting-adverse-incident>).

Phone 028 9052 3868

Email niaic@health-ni.gov.uk

Scotland

If you're in Scotland, email nss.irc@nhs.net to request a webform account.

Phone 0131 275 7575

4. Post completed test kit

Post your completed test kit no later than 1 hour before the last collection time of the day (weekend times may differ from weekdays). Do not take your test on a bank holiday. Take it on the following day instead.

You can walk, cycle or drive to your nearest priority postbox to post your test kit. You must follow the government's social distancing guidelines (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>), wear a mask and must not take public transport.

Only use a Royal Mail priority postbox with the label and one of the NHS regional logos. You must not enter any Post Office with your test kits.

Some priority postboxes have a Sunday collection.

Find your nearest priority postbox and its collection times (<http://www.royalmail.com/services-near-you>)

Track your delivery using your Royal Mail return label barcode (<http://www.royalmail.com/track-and-trace>)

5. Get test results by text and email

You should get your results 2 days after your home test is collected. It may take longer due to the volume of tests being processed.

Your results will be sent by email and as a text to the mobile number you provided when you registered online.

If you've not received your results after 5 days

Please call us if you've not received your results after 5 days:

- England, Wales and Northern Ireland: call 119 (free from mobiles and landlines)
- Scotland: call 0300 303 2713 (charged at your standard network rate)

Lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm.

How to test a child

- Do not conduct this test if you do not feel confident
- Do not continue the test if the child has any pain or asks to stop
- If for any reason you cannot do the test, please continue to self-isolate as a household
- The fabric tip of the swab must not touch anything apart from the tonsils at the back of throat and nose. If it touches anything else, it may spoil your sample

Prepare to take the sample

Remain calm and confident as you go through the process. This will help the child to stay calm too.

Talk through the steps together. If possible, practise without using any of the testing materials.

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".

For younger children, it may be helpful to give them a distraction while you conduct the test (such as a video) or make it into a game. You could also plan a reward for the child after the sample is taken.

Some children may feel more comfortable sitting on a caregiver's lap or have someone to hold their hand to try making them feel more comfortable and secure. Decide before starting who will comfort the child and who will do the test.

Play games and suggest they stick their tongue out (get them to copy you), then get them to say 'ahhhhhhhhhh'. Show them the swab stick and have them keep saying 'ahhhh' while you swab their tonsils.

Your child may have some gagging or brief discomfort when the swab touches their tonsils. This is normal for all age groups.

How to test your child for coronavirus (Covid-19...



Take the sample

1. Follow the instructions until you have checked the test kit contents.
2. Explain what you're going to do before you swab the tonsils and nose.
3. Ask the child to blow their nose and cough into a tissue. This is so that excess mucus does not interfere with the test. Throw the tissue away in a closed bin.
4. Look inside the child's mouth and find their tonsils at the back of the throat. You may use the torch on your phone to help you. This is where you'll swab the sample. If you cannot swab their tonsils, you can swab both of their nostrils instead. The result may be less accurate than a nose and tonsil swab.
5. Hold the swab in your hand, ask the child to 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). Remove the swab from the back of the throat.
6. Put the same end of the same swab gently into one of their nostrils until you feel some resistance. Rotate the swab for 10 to 15 seconds and slowly remove it. If you did not swab the tonsils, swab both nostrils for 10 to 15 seconds each.
7. Put the swab into the vial with the fabric tip facing down. Snap off the stick end, so that it fits inside without bending. Securely screw the lid onto the vial. The liquid must stay in the vial.
8. Go back to step 11 for how to package the test kit.

Coronavirus in children

Visit NHS 111 online (<http://www.111.nhs.uk/>) or call 111 if you're worried about a baby or child with symptoms.

If the baby or child seems very unwell, is getting worse, or you think there's something seriously wrong, call 999.

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

Get more advice about coronavirus in children (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/coronavirus-in-children>)

If you need help

If you have any questions or problems with this test kit, please call us:

- England, Wales and Northern Ireland: call 119 (free from mobiles and landlines)
- Scotland: call 0300 303 2713 (charged at your standard network rate)

Lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm.

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