

Frequently Asked Questions for positive Lateral Flow Tests

updated 12 January 2022

Why is the Government implementing this change now?

- With COVID-19 rates so high, we are very confident that someone with a positive LFD result will have COVID and can act on that test result without needing a PCR test too.
- This will mean people get the advice they need as quickly as possible to help stop chains of transmission.
- This change will also help ensure PCR tests are available for those who need them most but that is not the primary reason for this change.

Can I just take an LFD If I have symptoms?

- We advise anyone with the main symptoms of COVID to take a PCR not an LFD.
- Someone with COVID symptoms is more likely to have COVID than someone with no symptoms.
- We cannot guarantee that people will always swab well enough or pick up sufficient virus to be detected by LFD, whereas PCR will pick up small amounts of virus. That is why people at higher risk of having COVID are asked to take a PCR rather than LFD.
- LFDs are quick and simple to use and at high prevalence we can be very confident that if someone tests positive, they will have the virus. This makes them highly suitable for self-testing in people who do not have symptoms and are at lower risk of having the virus.

If I don't have the main symptoms of COVID, should I still take a PCR test?

- We recommend that you take a PCR test if you experience one of the three main symptoms.
- There are several [other symptoms](#) linked with COVID-19. However, these may have another cause and are not on their own a reason to have a PCR test.
- As has always been the case, if you are concerned about your symptoms or your condition is deteriorating, you can seek medical advice. It is possible that you may be asked to take a PCR test to support access to appropriate treatments.

When will confirmatory PCRs be reintroduced?

- We will keep this change under review and will likely reintroduce confirmatory PCR when there are sustained reductions in levels of prevalence across all regions.

Does this reduce the self-isolation period for people with COVID-19?

- No. As people should self-isolate from the date of onset of symptoms or their positive test result (regardless of test type), this does not reduce the overall length of their self-isolation period.

If I receive a positive LFD, what actions should I take?

- You should record your result on gov.uk and should self-isolate immediately.
- You can stop self-isolating after 7 days if you do another LFD test on both days 6 and 7 of your self-isolation period (no earlier) and if both tests are negative. Tests should be at least 24 hours apart.
- If you do not take LFD tests on days 6 and 7 of your self-isolation period or the result of either test is positive you should continue to self-isolate until you get negative results from two LFD tests on consecutive days or until you have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest.
- Those who leave self-isolation on or after day 7 are strongly advised to limit close contact with other people in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces, work from home if they can and minimise contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19.

Is anyone with a positive LFD advised to take a confirmatory PCR test?

- Yes, you need to take a PCR test if you wish to claim the Test and Trace Support Payment, are taking part in research or surveillance programme, or you have received a positive Day 2 LFD after arriving into the UK.

Why do I still need to take a PCR to claim Test and Trace Support Payments?

- You can only claim TTSP if you've had an assisted LFD or a PCR test.
- It is not possible to claim TTSP from a self-reported (at-home) LFD test – we need to take reasonable precautions to protect the public purse.

Why do I need to report my LFD results?

- It is important that you continue to report your LFD results through the usual channels.
- If they are negative, this enables us to understand the prevalence of COVID-19 in the country.
- If they are positive, we can provide the correct advice to you and those you've been in close contact with, to prevent onward spread of coronavirus. This is vital to protect the most vulnerable and get us back to a more normal way of life.

What if the NHS has sent me PCR kits to use?

- Around one million people in England who are at particular risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 have been identified by the NHS as being potentially eligible for new treatments.
- People who are eligible for treatments should only take a PCR test if they have symptoms, not just if they have a positive LFD.
- This is because people are only eligible for treatments if they are symptomatic and have a positive PCR test and directing asymptomatic patients to treatment could overwhelm treatment capacity and delay those most in need from getting treatment.
- Eligible people will receive a PCR test kit at home by mid-January to use if they develop symptoms. This group should use these priority PCR tests as it will enable prioritised laboratory handling.

I have taken a confirmatory PCR and it is negative, does that mean I can stop self-isolating even though my LFD was positive?

- Yes, but you should not take a PCR after a positive LFD unless you wish to apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment, you have received clinical advice to do so as you may need early access to treatments or are part of a research or surveillance programme, or you have received a positive Day 2 LFD after arriving into the UK or you have been advised to do for other reasons by the NHS.

What if my doctor or someone else tells me I need to take a PCR even though I've recently had a positive LFD result?

- You should follow the advice of your doctor. If someone develops symptoms and their medical condition is deteriorating, they should (as now) seek medical attention. It is possible that they may then be asked to take a PCR test to support access to appropriate treatments.

I have returned from abroad; do I still need to do a PCR test if I receive a positive LFD result on my Day 2 test?

- Yes. Anyone who receives a positive lateral flow test on or before their second day in England must self-isolate immediately and order an NHS PCR test from GOV.UK to verify the result.
- A positive PCR test following travel will be sequenced to understand if and where potentially dangerous variants are emerging around the world and entering the UK.