group policies and procedures

# covid-19 testing policy

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**Related policies and guidance**

**Document revision and approval history**

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# purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the present requirements for COVID-19 testing. This Policy will be reviewed and updated as and when required in accordance with national guidelines.

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# policy

**Symptomatic NHS staff and staff in NHS-commissioned independent healthcare providers (including return to work testing) –**

* Testing only for staff primarily working on wards focussed on treating severely immunocompromised individuals. severely immunocompromised refers to patients who are unlikely to mount an effective vaccine)
* No return to work testing.

**Symptomatic patient-facing healthcare staff (in NHS and NHS-commissioned independent healthcare providers), including return to work testing –**

Symptomatic patient-facing healthcare staff should follow advice for staff with symptoms of a respiratory infection or a positive COVID-19 test result:

* most healthcare staff who have symptoms of a respiratory infection are no longer asked to test for COVID-19
* healthcare staff who test positive for COVID-19 are no longer required to have 2 negative lateral flow device (LFD) tests for COVID-19 before they return to work

**Healthcare staff who are not providing direct inpatient care to those who are severely immunosuppressed –**

* Healthcare staff whose job does not primarily involve providing direct inpatient care to severely immunosuppressed patients, who have [symptoms of a respiratory infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-managing-healthcare-staff-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection/managing-healthcare-staff-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-or-a-positive-covid-19-test-result#symptoms), and who have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work, are advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.
* They are not required to take a COVID-19 test and should follow the [guidance for people with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19).
* They should stay at home until they no longer have a high temperature (if they had one) or until they no longer feel unwell.
* If these staff members have a positive COVID-19 test result, regardless of whether they have symptoms, they should follow [guidance for the general public who have a positive test result](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#PositiveResult).
  + If you have a positive COVID-19 test result, try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days after the day you took your test.
  + Although many people will no longer be infectious to others after 5 days, some people may be infectious to other people for up to 10 days from the start of their infection. You should avoid meeting people at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19, especially [those whose immune system means that they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, despite vaccination](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-people-whose-immune-system-means-they-are-at-higher-risk), for 10 days after the day you took your test.
* Line managers should undertake a risk assessment before patient-facing healthcare staff return to work in line with normal return to work processes.
* On returning to work, all staff members must continue to comply rigorously with all relevant [infection control precautions](https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-infection-prevention-and-control/), including appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) use.
* Local circumstances may lead to a decision to undertake symptomatic staff LFD testing in these settings, following risk assessment and direction from medical directors, nursing directors or infection prevention and control teams. In this situation, staff should follow local policy regarding criteria for returning to work.

**Staff members who are contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 –**

* People who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 are at the highest risk of becoming infected because they are most likely to have prolonged close contact. People who stayed overnight in the household of someone with COVID-19 are also at high risk.
* If you are a household or overnight contact of someone who has had a positive COVID-19 test result it can take up to 10 days for your infection to develop. It is possible to pass on COVID-19 to others, even if you have no symptoms.
* Staff who are identified as a household or overnight contact of someone who has had a positive COVID-19 test result should discuss ways to minimise risk of onwards transmission with their line manager.
* While they are attending work, staff who are household or overnight contacts of someone with COVID-19 must continue to comply rigorously with all relevant [infection control precautions](https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-infection-prevention-and-control/).
* If staff develop any symptoms during these 10 days, they should follow the [advice for staff with symptoms of a respiratory infection, including COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-managing-healthcare-staff-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection/managing-healthcare-staff-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-or-a-positive-covid-19-test-result#staff-members).