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News story

Government to extend testing for coronavirus to more frontline workers

Access to testing for those with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) will be extended across England to include additional frontline workers and symptomatic members of their household.

From: **Department of Health and Social Care (/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care)**

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- Symptomatic staff working in a greater number of professions will now be able to access

coronavirus testing

- Testing will allow those currently unable to return to work because they or a member of their family or household have symptoms of coronavirus to know whether they do have the virus
- Frontline workers now eligible for testing will include the police, the fire service, frontline benefits workers and those working with vulnerable children and adults among others
- Where there is extra testing capacity, testing will be expanded to other groups of workers that need it, including those delivering critical medical, energy, utility, transport and food supplies

Access to testing for those with symptoms of coronavirus will be extended across England to include additional frontline workers and symptomatic members of their family or household to allow the key worker to return to work.

Thanks to increased testing capacity the government is extending testing to a wider group of frontline workers in addition to patients, NHS or social care workers who need one.

This follows the launch of the government's partnership with universities, research institutes and companies to begin rollout of the network of new Lighthouse Labs and drive-through testing sites across the UK, with over 20 testing sites opened to date.

This network is providing thousands more polymerase chain reaction (PCR) swab tests, which are used to identify if someone currently has the virus, for frontline workers. This means those who test negative for coronavirus can return to work as soon as possible to support essential services.

The government is already working with local resilience forums to get additional critical workers in their areas tested, including police officers, fire and rescue service employees, and those running the justice system.

The full list of eligible workers now includes:

- all NHS and social care staff, including hospital, community and primary care, and staff providing support to frontline NHS services (for example accommodation, catering) and voluntary workers
- police, fire and rescue services
- local authority staff, including those working with vulnerable children, adults and victims of domestic abuse, and those working with the homeless and rough sleepers
- defence, prisons and probation staff, and judiciary
- frontline benefits workers

Anyone who is eligible – has symptoms of coronavirus a high temperature or new continuous cough – and would like to be tested should speak to their employer. The relevant employers will be provided with information on how to make an appointment with the programme either from their local resilience forum or direct from the Department of Health and Social Care.

See the updated guidance on getting tested: [Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested)

Government departments, national agencies and local resilience forums can refer other critical workers in their area for testing, but this will be determined by need and testing capacity available.

Where there is extra testing capacity, we will also expand testing to other groups of workers that need it. This will include those delivering critical medical, energy, utility, transport and food supplies in both the public and private sector.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

"I am determined to ensure that everyone who needs a coronavirus test should be able to have access to one. Today's expansion of testing will allow even more vital workers to return to the front line.

"We have built up capacity in the system with new testing and diagnostic facilities backed by Britain's world-class scientists and industry partners. This means we are now able to give even more workers who support and protect us the ability to know if they have coronavirus if they have been demonstrating symptoms.

"Testing is key in our battle against coronavirus and we will continue to prioritise patients, NHS and social care workers but we now have the ability to provide more people with the certainty they need to get back to the front line when it is safe to do so."

The government is working with local resilience forums across the country to offer tests to additional critical workers or members of their family or household with symptoms which means that they are currently isolating and unable to return to work.

The devolved administrations will operate their own eligibility criteria.

To build capacity the government is also developing mobile testing units and a home test kit that can be delivered to someone's door so they can test themselves, and their family, without leaving the house.

This follows further increased testing capacity at Public Health England (PHE) labs and NHS hospitals, which has meant that testing is taking place both for key NHS staff and patients.

In time a new website will enable eligible individuals to book a test directly. It will be another significant step forward in the coronavirus national testing programme.

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