Public Health England

NHS Test and Trace

12th March 2021

GP LETTER

Dear Colleague

Updated information for clinicians/health care professionals on COVID-19 PCR testing

There is an existing voluntary, opt-in programme available to all GPs in which testing can be provided via GP practices. The purpose of this programme is to reach vulnerable patients who might otherwise have limited access to testing, to support GPs in providing patient care and to provide easy access to testing for symptomatic general practice staff and their households. These tests are offered to improve timely access to testing and ensure symptomatic people safely isolate and protect others in their community.

This can be accessed by contacting the NHS Test and Trace Helpdesk on 119 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales and I&S in Scotland. For further information, please see https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-testing-in-general-practice

To enable healthcare professionals to recommend testing independent of symptoms, we have put in place a new option for people ordering tests where they have been directed to the online booking portal by you, their GP.

The specific details of how this can be accessed are included here:

Currently people are able to book a PCR test for COVID-19 through the government booking portal https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or via 119.

From the 5th March, an additional criteria has been added to the online government booking portal for ordering a PCR test in order to enable GPs and health professionals to instruct someone to book a test on the online system if they feel it is required, no matter what their symptoms are.

The reason "A GP or other healthcare professional has asked me (or someone I live with) to get a test" will be added to the 'reasons for getting tested' screen on the online Covid-19 PCR test booking page. This will allow you to recommend that your patients get tested if they have atypical symptoms or for other reasons, if you, their GP or another healthcare professional has asked them to get a test.

This does not replace the processes for tests for clinical care purposes that you may have in place in the NHS, through the voluntary opt-in scheme, or through other local NHS testing arrangements.

Members of the public continue to be directed to drive through, walk in and home testing services if they are symptomatic and require a test. The Chief Medical Officers, in conjunction with the public health agencies and the experts on the New and Emerging Respiratory Viral Threats Advisory Group continue to regularly review the optimum symptoms for this public-facing testing route.

Best wishes

Personal Data

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