

Rapid testing: Information Sheet for Employers

IMPORTANT UPDATES FOR APRIL

From 9 April 2021, everyone in England will be able to access free, rapid coronavirus testing.

In a significant step forward, which paves the way for businesses and society reopening, anyone will be able to access free, rapid lateral flow tests (LFDs) for themselves and their families to use twice a week, in line with clinical guidance.

Getting a rapid test is quick and convenient. Over 100,000 businesses in England have registered their interest to provide rapid tests to their employees, and the offer of free testing is being expanded to companies with over 10 workers until the end of June.

Whether an employer wants to set up on-site workplace testing, or offer tests for workers to take home (or a combination of the two), **they must register on gov.uk by 12 April.**

Once registered, employers will be able to place orders for Workplace Collect from early April. Employers will then need to arrange for their workers to collect the test kits from their workplaces and ask staff to use them to test twice weekly at home.

Our mobile community testing team is available to support employers with setting up testing on site. We can also run "Test & Collect" engagement days in the workplace to help familiarise your staff with how to self-test at home, report their results and (subject to availability) provide an initial supply of kits for employees to take home prior to delivery of Workplace Collect orders. For further information please contact **suffolk19testing@suffolk.gov.uk**.

The expanded offer for regular testing for smaller businesses (with less than 10 employees), or anyone without symptoms, will be available to access through:

- community testing, offered by all local authorities. To see the full list of locations where home test kits can be picked up as well as getting a supervised testing, visit: **www.suffolk.gov.uk/covid-19-asymptomatic-testing** or call **0333 772 6144**.
- collection at a local PCR test site during specific test collection time windows
- a new home ordering service, which allows people to order lateral flow tests online to be delivered to their home (from Friday 9th April).
- a new 'Pharmacy Collect' service which will enable people to visit a participating local pharmacy and collect a box of seven rapid tests to use twice a week at home.

To find your nearest testing centre and to book an appointment

Visit: **www.suffolk.gov.uk/covid-19-asymptomatic-testing**

Call: **0333 772 6144**

Further information about testing can be found at www.nhs.uk/get-tested. If testing at home, individuals will need to register their results online or by calling 119.

PCR TESTING FOLLOWING A POSITIVE LATERAL FLOW TEST RESULT

A confirmatory PCR test is now required for all positive rapid results tests, whether the test has been taken at home or at a test site. This allows positive cases to be traced sooner and will help stop the spread of variants in the UK. It will also make it highly unlikely that anyone will need to self-isolate unnecessarily.

It is important to book your follow-up PCR test as soon as you can following your positive lateral flow test result at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test. If you fail to take one within two days, you and your contacts will need to isolate for the full 10 days whatever the follow-up result.

If your lateral flow test result is positive, you must self-isolate immediately. You could be fined if you do not do this. You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme if you are required to self-isolate. If you take the PCR test within two days of the lateral flow test and receive a negative result, you and your household can stop self-isolating.

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Call: 0333 772 6144

Staying well at work:

Useful information

WHY SHOULD I ENCOURAGE MY STAFF TO GET TESTED?

An estimated one in three people with coronavirus do not have any symptoms, which means an increased risk of spread going undetected. We have seen first-hand the impact of large outbreaks and large numbers of staff having to self-isolate throughout the pandemic, which can affect both productivity and business continuity. Although the vaccine is coming it will take time before everyone is vaccinated. In the meantime, rapid testing is an important new tool for preventing the spread of the coronavirus and includes the following benefits to your business:

- Protects your employees' health and that of your customers
- Identifies cases earlier, reducing likely spread
- Minimises disruption to your business

WHAT DOES THE TEST INVOLVE?

Individuals attend one of our community testing sites where a simple swab is taken from the throat and nose. The swab is processed at the testing site and the result sent to the individual within an hour via text or email. Alternatively, home testing kits enable employees to self-test, and upload their results. These tests work on the same basis using a swab.

ARE THE TESTS ACCURATE?

No test is perfect. The most accurate test we have for COVID-19 is the PCR test, which involves the swab being sent to a laboratory for analysis and is used for when people have symptoms. PCR test results can take a day or so to come back but are usually very accurate. Please see above on the latest guidance for arranging a confirmatory PCR test in the event of a positive lateral flow test result.

Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) are not as accurate as PCR tests. A negative LFD test is not a 100% guarantee that you do not have the virus. However, lateral flow tests tend to detect individuals in their most infectious period. As one in three people may have the virus and never get symptoms, this can be a useful tool to find extra cases of COVID-19 before the virus is passed on. Evaluation of the LFD tests, compared to PCR tests, show LFD tests pick up between five out of 10 of the cases and nine out of 10 cases where the person has higher viral loads (amounts of the virus in the nose and throat), and are most infectious.

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Call: 0333 772 6144

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Because of this, people should continue to “act like they have the virus” even if their LFD test result is negative, ensuring that they continue to adhere to all the prevention of transmission guidance, including to wash their hands frequently, socially distance and wear face coverings. For the latest guidance, visit: www.gov.uk/coronavirus.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about Suffolk’s rapid testing project, to book an appointment and for regular updates

Visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/covid-19-asymptomatic-testing

Call: 0333 772 6144

For more information about lateral flow testing

Visit: www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-lateral-flow-antigen-testing-for-people-without-symptoms

OTHER USEFUL LINKS AND NUMBERS

- For more information about the Home, But Not Alone helpline, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/home-but-not-alone
- Suffolk Advice and Support Advice provides free, confidential advice on issues such as finance, housing, debt and a range of other support. Find out more, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/suffolk-advice-and-support-service