

Coronavirus Testing for Carers Your Questions Answered



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Testing for coronavirus is now for anyone over the age of 5 across the UK. The test determines whether someone currently has the virus or not, and is a key part of the Scottish Government's Test & Protect strategy. This briefing outlines the key points on testing that unpaid carers should be aware of.

Who is the test for?

The coronavirus test is for anyone over the age of 5 who has symptoms of coronavirus. Symptoms are: continuous cough; fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater); loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste. More information on symptoms and how to manage them can be found on [NHS Inform](#).

The test does not determine whether or not you have had the virus and is only effective for those who currently have symptoms.

Are unpaid carers a priority group?

Yes. There are a number of priority groups that have been identified, such as NHS staff and key worker. Unpaid carers are included in Group 4. The Scottish Government [testing website](#) states:

Staff and volunteers in third or public sector organisations including unpaid carers, and staff in nationally or locally significant industry important to economic sustainability and growth

Priority Groups have been formed on the basis of broad workforce category. This is an administrative grouping and is not indicative of level of importance. For example, someone in priority group 4 could be tested before someone who is in group

When should I get tested?

You should request a coronavirus test if you are displaying symptoms of the virus as listed above. The optimum time to get tested is within the first 3 days of symptoms. The test can be taken up until day 5 of symptoms. Testing more than 5 days after symptoms has first appeared will not be effective and tests will only be taken on a case by case basis after this time.

If you do not have symptoms of coronavirus you should not request a test even as a precautionary measure. Supplies of tests are limited and it is important that they are given to those who have symptoms.

How do I get tested?

There are two ways to access a test: through visiting a testing centre, or through a home testing kit. To arrange either of these tests you will need to use the [self-referral testing portal](#). This will take you through the steps necessary to book a test.

When going through the steps, a prompt will ask 'Why are you getting tested?' Unpaid carers should select the category 'Volunteers'. This is the category that has been allocated to everyone in the priority 4 grouping.

Where are the testing centres?

There are a number of testing centres across Scotland. These are:

- Glasgow Airport
- Edinburgh Airport
- Aberdeen Airport
- Inverness - University of the Highlands and Islands campus
- Perth – University of Highland and Islands campus

You should not travel to a testing site unless you have already booked a test through the portal. The sites are not able to test those who turn up without a previously booked appointment.

There are also a number of mobile testing units which will be located in towns across Scotland for short periods each time. The self-referral testing portal will help you book the most convenient testing site.

For those who do not have internet access, tests can be booked by calling the national helpline number on 0300 303 2713. Carers should select the option for Scotland, and wait to hear options for help required. A test will then be manually booked at appropriate test site by helpline staff. Once the test has been booked a unique code will be issued via text message or email, which should be taken to the agreed test site.

Do I have to travel far in order to get a test?

No. The guidance is that you should not travel for more than 90 minutes in order to get a test. Home test kits are available for those that are unable to travel, for example, if your caring situation means you are unable to travel to a testing centre.

How do I get a home testing kit?

To organise a home testing kit you use the [self-referral portal](#). This will take you through the steps necessary. There is currently high demand for home testing kits and supply is limited. You may need to visit the portal a number of times before you can get a home test.

What happens if I get a home testing kit?

Home testing kits come with a full set of instructions on how to take the test. This includes a short video which will take you through the process step by step. There is also a dedicated helpline number available to support people taking tests at home. Details of this are provided within the test kit. The test involves taking a swab from your nose and from the back of your throat.

The instructions also show you how to package your completed test safely and the process for returning it.

Home tests are not currently available for some remote and rural areas (postcodes covered by Royal Mail's 24 hour delivery exclusion). This is because of the length of time that it takes to get samples to the labs – meaning samples could degrade and make the results invalid.

The Scottish Government is working on ways to ensure everyone who needs tests get it. In addition to the UK Government programme extending the reach of testing through roving mobile testing units, the UK Government is also able to offer emergency testing measures if there is an outbreak in remote areas and local testing routes cannot meet need.

Is a home test reliable?

Yes. Full instructions are included with each test and research carried out internationally shows that self-testing is as effective at getting the sample required as it would be had a clinician undertaken the test for you.

How do I get my results?

Test results are sent via text message within 48 hours of the test being taken.

My test result if positive, what happens now?

If your test results are positive you should [follow the advice on NHS inform](#) for households for coronavirus infection. This includes isolating for 14 days. You may also wish to look at the [specific guidance for unpaid carers on coronavirus](#).

If carers, family and friends are unable to provide essential care for someone due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19, or any other reason, they should contact their local social work department. See the social work department contact details.

Carers who do not already have an emergency plan in place may also want to talk with family and friends about who could take over their caring role if they become ill or need to self-isolate – particularly while social work services are under additional pressure during the coronavirus outbreak.

Local carer centres are also able to support carers with the preparation of an emergency plan. It will also be important to make sure that you have key information about the person you care for easily available - so that anyone taking over their care has all the information they need

You can find your local carers centre here.

I'm not symptomatic but the person I care for is, what happens?

You can request a test on behalf of someone else, following the same steps as above through the self-referral portal. The results will be sent to the mobile number you provide when requesting the test.

Can I request more than one test?

Yes, you can request additional tests through the portal, however orders are now limited to four home test kits per household per order.

Where can I go for more information?

For full information on coronavirus visit [NHS Inform](#).

Further Information

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