

Frequently Asked Questions - Asymptomatic testing - Education and Childcare Settings

What is asymptomatic testing?

Asymptomatic testing is testing people for coronavirus who are not displaying any of the normal symptoms to see if they are unknowingly carrying the virus.

If individuals have coronavirus symptoms, they should [self-isolate](#) and arrange to have a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test (you can book [online](#) or by calling 119) and not use the LFD test.

Why are you offering tests?

The aim of the testing is to quickly identify those who are unknowingly carrying the virus so that they can self-isolate. This will prevent less people catching the virus and reduce the amount of close contacts who have to self-isolate reducing the impact that coronavirus has on face to face education and childcare.

These tests will also help us to gain a much clearer picture of what is really happening in our schools and settings and provide reassurance to the wider community.

It is recognised that asymptomatic testing is likely to lead to an increase in case rates initially, however this increase is likely to decline once positive cases are isolated and transmission chains are broken.

What is involved with the asymptomatic testing for education and childcare?

Education and registered childcare and play settings will have access to Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) for distribution to any eligible individuals that would like to take part. This enables anyone who is eligible to undertake a test for coronavirus at home twice a week. The LFDs provide a result within 30 minutes and don't require a laboratory to process.

Who is eligible for the routine tests?

All staff working in childcare and education settings are eligible for testing.

In addition, all upper secondary school pupils in years 10-13 and all Further Education (FE) learners will be able to access LFDs to undertake regular twice weekly asymptomatic testing, alongside the current provision for staff listed above.

Which learners will be eligible to access routine testing?

We intend for all learners in years 10-13 and in all learners in FE colleges to be able to access LFDs should they choose to undertake regular twice weekly asymptomatic testing.

Should learners with additional support needs take part in this testing offer?

For some learners with additional support needs it may not be appropriate for testing to take place under any circumstances. Schools should work with parents/carers and those who work most closely with pupils with additional support needs to decide whether testing will be appropriate, taking into consideration the needs of the individual.

Risk assessments play a key role in considering the individual needs of young people with additional support needs, and may be used to consider whether the self-test programme will be appropriate (taking into account the potential for support from parents or guardians).

Which setting can offer routine tests?

In education, this includes:

- Primary Schools
- Secondary Schools
- Special Schools
- Independent Schools
- Independent Specialist Colleges
- Further Education Colleges
- Middle Schools
- Pupil referral units

All childcare and play staff are eligible for testing, including those working in all roles at day care settings and childminders. This includes:

- Full day care
- sessional care
- crèche's
- play groups/ Cylchoedd Meithrin
- staffed playwork provision
- Flying Start provision.

Is testing voluntary?

Yes, testing is voluntary, but individuals are strongly encouraged to take up the offer to further reduce the risk of asymptomatic transmission.

If individuals have coronavirus symptoms, they should arrange to have a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test you can book [online](#) or by calling 119 and not use the lateral flow device (LFD) test.

Do I have to take a test in order to attend school / college?

No. The purpose of this testing offer is to try and quickly find those who are carrying the virus without displaying any symptoms and ask them to self-isolate. This will reduce disruption to face to face education.

No test is perfect and lateral flow tests should not be used as a confirmation that the individual is not carrying the virus in order to attend school or college as sometimes the test may not pick up when someone is infectious.

Once the individual understands the testing process and has read a privacy notice, if they choose to participate they are committing to self-administer the test and provide their results. Education and childcare settings should ensure that individuals provide their results (positive, negative or void) to the NHS via the results portal. Results should also be shared with their workplace to support local contact tracing.

What is a Lateral Flow Test Device?

Lateral Flow (Antigen) testing involves the processing of nasal and throat swab samples with a Lateral Flow Device (LFD). The device, best described as looking like a home pregnancy test, detects a protein (antigen) produced by the virus. If present in the person's sample, a coloured line appears on the device that can be read between 20-30 minutes after processing.

What is the difference between regular polymerise chain reaction (PCR) tests and Lateral Flow Tests?

Both the RT-PCR test and lateral flow test require a swab to be taken from the nose and throat. The RT-PCR is used for those who are experiencing symptoms and the swab is analysed in a lab.

Whereas, a lateral flow test is used for those not experiencing symptoms and the swab can be analysed using a lateral flow device at home, so the results can be returned within an hour. While LFDs are not as sensitive as lab-based RT-PCR tests, scientific advice has indicated that by testing more frequently with LFDs, their accuracy is on a par with RT-PCR tests and this is why we repeat the tests on a twice weekly basis.

Why are you asking education and childcare settings to undertake routine testing?

The Welsh Government are offering staff in education and childcare settings and all upper secondary school (years 10-13) and FE learners, the opportunity to undergo twice weekly testing. Testing is voluntary, although all those offered the test are encouraged to take up the offer.

Education and childcare settings have implemented the control measures outlined in sector guidance to reduce the risk of transmission. The testing offer will enable settings to reduce this risk further by safeguarding against the transmission of the coronavirus by those who show no symptoms.

Recent pilots in Wales and the wider UK have shown how routine, rapid testing can be used effectively and have positive impacts in schools and other settings.

The routine test regime tests asymptomatic individuals – those who do not have coronavirus symptoms. If an asymptomatic person receives a positive test result via the routine testing (see further advice on a positive test below), they must [self-isolate](#) according to the guidance in order to prevent further transmission of the virus. In this way twice weekly testing identifies cases of coronavirus that would otherwise have not been found and helps to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the community.

While twice weekly testing help us prevent the spread in the community, it is important that settings continue to implement the control measures outlined in the guidance specific to the settings to lessen the risk of transmission and likelihood of positive test results.

Are the tests provided free of charge?

Yes. There is no charge for the tests.

How do I order my tests?

Initially all schools, colleges, alternative provision and registered childcare settings that are open will be sent tests kits.

The school or setting will manage the collection of tests (7 in a box for staff and 3 in a box for pupils/learners) to individuals who would like to take part in regular testing.

For individuals who do not wish to participate in twice weekly testing, they are able to attend the setting providing they have not come into contact with a positive case, developed symptoms or received a positive COVID-19 test result outside the setting's testing programme.

How often should I take the test?

It is recommended that the tests are taken twice weekly i.e. two tests 3-4 days apart per week. It is for the individuals and the individual settings to make appropriate arrangements for the days on which tests are undertaken.

When should I take the test?

It is strongly recommended that tests are taken before you attend the setting in the morning. The further way from attendance at your setting the less representative the test result will be of your current infection state.

Do I have to take the test on the same days each week?

Yes, it is advised that tests should be taken on a fixed schedule e.g. the same days and times each week.

If I've previously had coronavirus in the last 90 days should I still undertake twice weekly testing?

Anyone that has previously tested positive for COVID-19 via a PCR test should not be tested on this programme within a period of 90 days from their initial illness onset or test (if asymptomatic).

The education and childcare programme is not for individuals who are symptomatic and tests should not be used in those circumstances. If you go on to develop new COVID-19 symptoms within this time, you should not take your lateral flow test, please urgently book a PCR test and self-isolate. You can arrange a test by booking online or by calling 119.

I have been vaccinated should I still take the tests?

Yes, the LFD test confirms if you are infectious to other people. Current scientific advice is that vaccinated individuals should still take part in the same way as anyone who has not been vaccinated. This will be kept under review and any changes will be communicated through the schools and settings leads.

How will the testing work?

Education and childcare settings will be supplied with at home Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits which individuals will be able to use twice weekly 3-4 days apart before coming into work or setting, ideally in the morning. The LFDs supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in about 30 minutes. Testing is not mandatory for individuals and they will not need to produce a negative test result, or provide proof of having taken a test, to return to work in person. However, testing is strongly encouraged.

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect asymptomatic COVID-19 cases. The speed and convenience of the tests supports the detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals, who would not otherwise have got tested. LFD tests are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and are crucial in the fight against the virus. The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace current testing policy for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms, whether they are involved in the asymptomatic testing programme or not, will still be expected to obtain a PCR test and follow NHS Test, Trace, Protect Guidance, [self-isolating](#) until they have received their results.

Settings and individuals must continue with all current protective measures – asymptomatic testing does not replace these controls or make these less important in controlling the virus.

How accurate is a lateral flow device test?

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. The speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested.

Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from Public Health England and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate and sensitive enough to be used in the community for screening and surveillance purposes.

LFD tests identify individuals with the early stage of infectiousness and with the highest infectivity. These individuals tend to spread the virus to many people and so identifying by LFD remains important.

It is important to remember that these tests are an additional layer of health protection measure in addition to face coverings, social distancing etc. People who have had a negative LFD test must still comply with the relevant protective measures for their workplace.

How do I undertake the test?

Training is not required, the tests can be self-administered and come with clear instructions, but in summary:

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly
- Remove the test (being careful not to touch the soft part)
- Open your mouth wide. Use the swab to rub the back of your throat firmly four times on each side
- Remove the swab without touching teeth, tongue or gums
- Gently place it in your nostrils (2.5 cm inside) and rub the swab along the lining of your nostril 4-5 times
- Remove (being careful the swab doesn't touch anything)
- Place it in the tube for testing for 30 minutes and await the result (a coloured line will appear if positive)
- Wash hands thoroughly after disposing of the test

Each time an individual takes a test they need to record the result via the online results portal (which can be accessed via a smartphone) or by the phone number provided in the test kit. This needs to be done each time a test is taken regardless of whether the result is negative or positive.

How do individuals with complex needs undertake the test?

For some learners with additional support needs it may not be possible to self-swab and process the tests. In these cases it may be possible for parents or guardians to support the process. It is for the individual and their parents/guardian to consider if participation with the testing programme is appropriate, taking into consideration the needs of the individual.

What do I do if the result is positive?

If the result is positive you will need to:

- record this via the online results portal. It is strongly recommended that pupils/learners seek the support of their parents/guardians.

- Notify your household members of the result and ask them to start self-isolating as soon as possible.
- You will also have to notify your schools, college or setting
- Those that work in childcare settings will also need to notify Care Inspectorate Wales
- confirm the positive result by arranging a PCR test at a testing centre as soon as possible. You can arrange a test by booking [online](#) or by calling 119.

In the meantime, you must follow the [self-isolation guidance](#) and self-isolate for 10 days, as will all members of your household. This should start immediately from the LFD positive test result.

If the PCR test result is negative you can end your self-isolation period and resume twice weekly testing.

What do I do if the result is negative?

If the test result is negative, you will need to record this via the online results portal but no further action is required and you can continue your day as usual. All results must be recorded.

How do I dispose of the test?

Regardless of the test result, once your test is complete, put all of the used test kit contents in the waste bag provided. Seal the bag and keep this in a safe place for 72 hours, after this time dispose of the bag in your general household waste.

Can I use the test on a member of my family?

No, the tests are for those working in education, childcare and play settings and those learners in upper secondary school (years 10-13) and FE learners. This means that tests should not be used for family members.

Lateral flow tests should not be used if you develop symptoms, please book a PCR test if you develop symptoms.

How do I store the tests?

The tests kits should be stored indoors in a dry space where the temperature does not drop beneath 2 degrees and does not exceed 30 degrees. When taking and processing the tests, these should be at room temperature (approximately 15 to 30 degrees).

Settings will need to create and update a test kit log and a test register to record the distribution of test kits and manage test kit supply.

Why are upper secondary school (years 10-13) and FE learners included in this testing approach?

There is still no evidence to suggest widespread transmission in our schools and colleges but there is no way of knowing where transmission may occur outside of the regulated classroom environment. It is with this in mind that we are extending the offer of regular, twice weekly, LFDs at home to include all those in upper secondary school and college learners. This will start with offering tests to years 10 to 13 in all schools and all FE college learners.

While twice weekly testing help us prevent the spread in the community, it is important that we all continue to follow the guidance around managing the risks of coronavirus.

We will continue to regularly review the testing offer.

Why are younger children not included in this testing approach?

Current Public Health data shows that the prevalence of COVID-19 is higher in the older year groups and decreases with age. It is acknowledged that upper secondary and FE college age groups are significantly less likely to become unwell from COVID-19 however the evidence does suggest that this age group probably do transmit the virus to the same level as adults whereas young children do not transmit to the same levels. As such younger children are currently not included in the testing approach.

We will continue to be led by what the data is telling us and will keep eligibility of testing under review.