

Frequently Asked Questions: Lateral Flow Tests

(abridged from DfE and NHS Test and Trace Guidance)

What are the objectives of the Government's asymptomatic testing strategy in education settings?

As many as one in three people who contract the virus show no symptoms (they are asymptomatic), so could be spreading the disease unknowingly. Asymptomatic testing will help to identify positive cases more quickly and break the chains of transmission. Those who test positive will self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.

No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of antigen LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested.

All existing protective measures set out in guidance (e.g. social distancing, handwashing, face coverings where needed, bubbles) remain important and the need for these is not lessened.

What is the Government's plan for pupils and students' return to secondary schools and FE colleges from March 8th during the national lockdown?

Rapid testing using antigen LFD's will support the return to education by helping to identify people who are infectious but do not have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. In secondary schools and colleges, home test kits will be available for all staff for regular testing.

During the week commencing 8 March, pupils and students will be offered asymptomatic testing on site in secondary schools. For pupils and students, they will need to be tested 3 times at an on-site Asymptomatic Testing Site (ATS), upon their return to school or college. This will give pupils and students the opportunity to get used to swabbing in a supervised environment first. They will then be provided with home test kits for regular twice weekly testing. ***Testing remains voluntary.***

Pupils and students not undergoing testing should attend school/college in line with their school/college's phased return arrangements.

Vulnerable children and children of critical workers in secondary schools should continue to attend school throughout, unless they receive a positive test result.

Testing should begin when pupils and students return but it can be phased to manage the numbers passing through the test site at any one time.

Is participation in testing compulsory?

Testing is voluntary but staff, pupils and students are strongly encouraged to participate as testing regularly helps to reduce the spread in school and college settings through asymptomatic

transmission.

Why are you using antigen lateral flow tests instead of PCR tests?

Antigen LFD tests produce results much quicker than PCR tests. With antigen lateral flow tests, a result is available after 30 minutes rather than 1-2 days as is the case with PCR tests. The rapid turnaround has a significant impact on transmission reduction that might occur in the time gap.

Are the antigen LFD tests accurate?

Antigen lateral flow tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID19 in asymptomatic individuals and are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the antigen 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.

Antigen LFD tests identify individuals who are likely to be infectious. 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.

Home testing

When should staff, pupils and students do the testing? Mornings vs evening? Is weekend testing allowed?

Staff, pupils and students should test twice weekly before coming into school/college, ideally in the morning. If they cannot take the test in the morning, they should take it as soon as possible before coming into school/college.

How will staff, pupils and students know what do to with the home test kits?

Detailed information how to self-swab and process the tests is in the Instructions for Use and there is an NHS video demonstrating how to carry out a test . In addition, a detailed How to Guide for home testing, is available.

Can students and pupils swab themselves?

Yes, in an Asymptomatic Testing Site all pupils 11 and above, can swab themselves if they are able to. When testing at home, Students aged 18 and over should self-test and report the result, with assistance if needed. Pupils aged 12-17 should self-test and report with adult supervision. The adult

may conduct the test if necessary. When testing at home children aged 11 (who attend a secondary school) should be tested/swabbed by an adult.

How will test results get recorded when schools and colleges move to home testing?

Staff, pupils or students (or the parent) are required to report the test result via the NHS Online reporting system for both negative, void and positive test results. They should also report positive, negative and void results to the school/college. If the result is positive, the individual should isolate, and the school/college should help with contact tracing. They will also need to arrange a labbased polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the result if the test was done at home. Those with a negative antigen LFD test result can continue to attend school/college and use protective measures.

Why do I need to share information on antigen LFD test results both with NHS Test & Trace and my school?

It is a requirement to share results with NHS Test & Trace so that contact tracing (particularly outside the school environment can take place) and clinical evaluation of the testing programme can continue. Staff, pupils/students should share results with their school so that if positive, immediate contact tracing can take place in school.

Void and negative results are useful information for their school both to monitor stocks of kits and to identify any issues that might need escalating to DfE or NHS Test & Trace.

Can my family get tested too?

No, this asymptomatic antigen LFD testing is for staff, pupils and students in schools/colleges. The tests will be handed to staff, pupils and students for personal use and should not be used for anyone else. If family members experience COVID19 symptoms, they must follow standard Government guidance, including selfisolating immediately and booking a test through the NHS Coronavirus (COVID 19) service or by calling 119 (England and Wales).

Should someone who has been vaccinated take an antigen LFD test?

Yes, we do not yet know whether vaccines prevent individuals transmitting the virus. If school/college staff have been vaccinated, they should continue to follow the steps set out in the guidance. The vaccine does not interfere with the antigen LFD or PCR tests.

What happens if a school cannot get the consent to test a child who is in school?

Testing on site requires active consent from the person being tested, or, if they are under 16, their parent or legal guardian. ***Any staff member, student, or pupil who does not take part in testing will still be able to attend school or college unless they develop symptoms or have been in close contact with anyone with a positive result.***

What happens if a pupil, student, or staff member's antigen lateral flow test result is positive?

Individuals who return a positive antigen LFD test result must self-isolate immediately in line with NHS Test and Trace guidance. They should also inform their school or college of the positive result and must order a confirmatory PCR test if they are testing at home (confirmatory PCR tests are not needed if the test was conducted through an on-site ATS).

Should I still take part in the asymptomatic testing programme if I have recently tested positive for COVID-19?

If you have tested positive by PCR for COVID-19, you will probably have developed some immunity to the disease. However, it cannot be guaranteed that everyone will develop immunity, or how long it will last. It is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after COVID-19 infection. Anyone who has previously received a positive COVID-19 PCR test result should not be re-tested within 90 days of that test, unless they develop any new symptoms of COVID-19.

Do test results get affected by brushing teeth, drinking water?

Avoid eating or drinking half an hour before the test. A small amount of water is acceptable. There is unlikely to be an adverse impact of brushing teeth prior to testing but it might be prudent to wait a while before testing.

Are the swabs latex free?

The manufacturer has confirmed that Innova swabs are latex free.

Do the LFD tests contain animal products or have they been tested on animals?

All of the antibodies are necessarily generated from animal cells. While we do not test any of these products on animals, nor are animals harmed in the development process, the antibodies used for the test reaction are derived using an animal cell in the laboratory. The T line for a positive test is derived by reaction between the sample as it flows to the membrane (thin paper like material inside the device) which is coated with these antibodies. **It is therefore highly unlikely for there to be any direct contact between the person being tested and the animal material itself.** However, we want to make sure that the people undertaking the test make an informed choice about this.

Are the LFD tests vegan?

The monoclonal antibody technology present in our lateral flow devices are generated from animal cells. **During development, at no time have any component parts been tested on animals.**

Are the LFD tests halal?

No animal products have been used in the production of the swabs. The swab is the only material with which the individual will come into direct contact. The individual using the test will not come into direct contact with any materials made from animal products. The thin paper like material inside the LFD is coated with antibodies from animal cells. No direct contact will be made between the person and this material. The monoclonal antibody technology present in our lateral flow devices are generated from animal cells. This is in common with other tests of this kind, including commercially available pregnancy tests.

Is the LFD test safe for those that are pregnant?

Yes, the tests are safe to use by those who are pregnant.