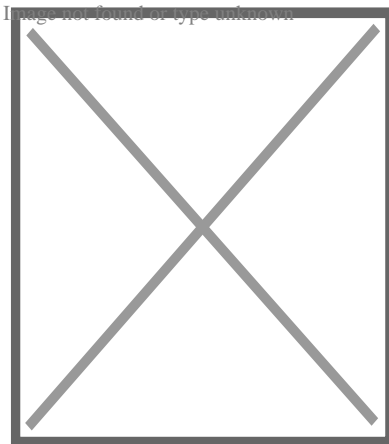


Test, Trace and Protect

03 Jun 2020



Updated: Friday 9th December 2020

Each nation in the UK has introduced its own version of the same system that tests people who consider that they may have Covid-19 and then follows this up by tracing others they have had contact with, with the intention that they then self isolate.

[The main Government webpage for Coronavirus is here.](#)

We've called on the government to protect health and care workers – and everyone else as a result – by making sure anyone who has to self-isolate through the track and trace system does so with full pay.

[You can read the letters we've sent to the government here.](#)

What does this mean in terms of self isolating?

- If you have Covid-19 symptoms you should self isolate for at least 10 days from noticing the symptoms
- If you live with someone who has tested positive, you must self isolate for 10 days from them noticing the symptoms
- If someone in your support bubble, childcare bubble or Christmas bubble has tested positive, you must self isolate for 10 days from them noticing the symptoms
- If you have been told by the NHS test and trace service to self isolate because of contact with an infected person you must do so and not attend work. They will inform you of how long to isolate.

What should you do if you have symptoms?

- As previously, you must self isolate
- You should apply for a test to establish if you have Covid-19
- You should notify your employer and inform them that you have symptoms and need to isolate. Inform them of any other workers you have had close contact with in the 48 hours before showing Covid-19 symptoms.
- If you test positive, your household and people in any bubbles that you may be part of need to self isolate too. If they develop symptoms they will need to book a test too
- If you receive a positive test, inform your employer

What steps should my employer be taking?

- The government advice is clear – that employers need to take steps to reduce the risk



of transmission

- It is in the interest of employers to do so – if they don't, they face the prospect of workers being told to self isolate, especially if the workplace is seen as the “source” of people becoming infected
- Where possible, workers should still work from home – and you can do so whilst self isolating (though only if you are well enough to work)

What about pay when I'm self-isolating?

- GMB believes that you should receive full pay whilst either off sick or when self isolating due to Covid-19 – we have negotiated this with many employers across a whole range of industries
- The Government says that your minimum entitlement is that you receive sick pay – for some that will be Statutory Sick Pay (currently fixed at £95.85 a week) but for many contractual sick pay will be much higher
- For those who have a points based sick pay scheme or where it is limited to a set amount of time, GMB believes that any absence as a consequence of Covid-19 (whether it be for sickness, self isolation or shielding) should not count towards your “sick days” – this has been negotiated with a number of employers
- Some people may be eligible for a £500 payment, see our guidance on Self Isolating for more information - <https://www.gmb.org.uk/self-isolation>

What does the test involve (from the NHS)?

The test usually involves taking a swab of the inside of your nose and the back of your throat, using a long cotton bud.

You can do the swab yourself (if you are aged 12 or over) or someone can do it for you. Children aged 11 or under cannot do the swab themselves. Their parent or guardian will have to swab test them.

Can my employer force me to take a COVID-19 test? Can I refuse to be tested?

The testing regime is voluntary and ultimately an employer cannot force an employee to take the test against their will.

But this is similar ground to a request to take a drug and alcohol test, or attend an appointment with occupational health, and refusal may be considered refusal of a reasonable management request, which could result in disciplinary action.

However, failure to attend Occupational Health appointments would not usually be considered an act of gross misconduct, unless it was part of a longer term pattern of behaviour.

Do I have to tell my employer the result of the test?

The test result is confidential medical information, so your employer must have your consent to receive the information. However, if you test positive for Covid you should self-isolate at home, and you will need to explain to your employer why you are unable to attend work.

Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires workers not to deliberately act in a way to put others at risk, and this would clearly be the case if you were to return to work knowing you had Covid.

In all cases, it is best to be clear on what your employer's policy is, and if you have concerns, speak to GMB before potentially considering an individual or collective grievance.

Test and Trace Workplace Checklist

Is your employer...

Test and Trace Workplace Checklist tick

1. Ensuring safe working for everyone in line with the advice.
2. Ensuring that workers get themselves tested if they suspect that they may have Covid-19 and insisting that they self isolate.

3. Informing co-workers if a worker is tested positive and ensuring that they follow Government guidance*
4. Ensuring that workers are financially supported whilst off sick or self isolating by paying full pay (otherwise some workers may feel that they have to work in order to make ends meet).
5. Allowing all workers who can work from home to do so.
6. Protecting vulnerable workers and those who live with vulnerable workers by allowing them to work from home, placing them on furlough or introducing additional safety measures.

* Government advice if you have been in close contact with someone at work who may be infected (unless told to self isolate by track and trace):

“At this stage, those close contacts should not self-isolate, but they:

- *must avoid individuals who are at high-risk of contracting COVID-19, for example, because they have pre-existing medical conditions, such as respiratory issues*
- *must take extra care in practising social distancing and good hygiene and in watching out for symptoms*
- *will be better prepared if the person who has symptoms has a positive test result and if they (the contact) receive a notification from the NHS test and trace service explaining they need to self-isolate”*

