

# Covid-19: Test and Trace Self - Isolation Guide

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## Introduction

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The Test and Trace system introduced by the UK government is intended to become a central part of the strategy in the fight to get the coronavirus pandemic under control, particularly as the vaccine programme progresses and Covid measures are relaxed. This guide is designed to provide an overview of NHS Test and Trace system, including what happens if you test positive for coronavirus (Covid-19) or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive.

Systems differ in each devolved nation and Republic of Ireland, see below links for:

[Wales](#) **Test, trace, protect coronavirus**

[Scotland](#) **Coronavirus Covid-19 Test and Protect**

[Northern Ireland](#) **Coronavirus Covid-19 Contact tracing**

[ROI](#) **Covid-19 Contact Tracing Centres: Your questions answered**

### Quick link Access to info

1. [How NHS Test and Trace helps fight the virus](#)
2. [How NHS Test and Trace works](#)
3. [Exemptions from self-isolation for contacts](#)
4. [The NHS Covid-19 app](#)
5. [Part 1: people who develop symptoms of Covid-19](#)
6. [Part 2: people who have had close contact with someone who has Covid-19](#)
7. [Support for people who are self-isolating](#)
8. [NHS QR check-in codes for your venue](#)

### How the Test and Trace System works when a person has Symptoms of Covid-19

- **Self-isolate:** as soon as you experience Covid-19 symptoms, medical advice is clear: you should self-isolate for at least 10 days, unless you get a negative PCR test. Your self-isolation period includes the day your symptoms started and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your symptoms started at any time on the 15th of the month, your self-isolation period ends at 23:59 on the 25th. You may also find this [stay at home illustration](#) useful.
- **Anyone else in your household,** unless they are exempt (see 'Exemptions from self-isolation for contacts' below), should also self-isolate for 10 days from when you started having symptoms. This includes the day your symptoms started and the next 10 full days. Other people in your household can get a test whether or not they have symptoms. Read [further guidance on getting a free test](#).

- **Test:** [get a free NHS test immediately to check if you have Covid-19](#) or call 119 if you have no internet access. You can leave self-isolation to get a test at a test site or to take a home test to a [priority post box](#).
- **Results:** if you are notified by NHS Test and Trace that your test is positive, you must complete the remainder of your 10-day self-isolation. Anyone in your household must also complete self-isolation for 10 days from when you started having symptoms unless they are exempt (see 'Exemptions from self-isolation for contacts' below). Failure to self-isolate for the full time period can result in a fine, starting from £1,000.
- **If your test is negative** you will no longer be required to self-isolate, though you may wish to do so if you still feel unwell and have symptoms similar to Covid-19. This also applies to any household members who were self-isolating.
- **Share contacts:** if you test positive for Covid-19, NHS Test and Trace will send you a text or email alert or call you with instructions of how to share details of other people in your household and any other people with whom you have had close, recent contact and places you have visited.
- **It is important that you respond quickly and accurately** so that we can give appropriate advice to those who need it. You will be told to do this online via a secure website or you will be called by one of our contract tracers or by your local authority.

## **Get an isolation note**

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Use this [Get an isolation note](#) service if you have been told to self-isolate because of coronavirus and you need a note for your employer.

### **Contacted by NHS Test and Trace: Close contact with someone who has tested positive**

- **Alert:** you will be alerted by NHS Test and Trace if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19. The alert will usually come by text, email or phone call. You should then log on to the NHS Test and Trace website, which is normally the easiest way for you and the service to communicate with each other – but, if not, a trained call handler will talk you through what you must do. Under-18s will get a phone call and a parent or guardian will be asked to give permission for the call to continue
- **Self-isolate:** you will be told to self-isolate until 10 full days after your last contact with the person who has tested positive. If, for example, your last contact with them was at any time on the 15th of the month, your self-isolation period ends at 23:59 on the 25th. It is really important to do this even if you do not feel unwell because you could still be infectious to others. Failure to self-isolate for the full time period can result in a fine, starting from £1,000.
- **Your household** does not need to self-isolate with you if you do not have symptoms, but they should take extra care to [avoid catching and spreading Covid-19](#).

- **Take a PCR test:** you are advised to take a PCR test after being identified as a contact, even if you do not have symptoms. You should also take a PCR test if you develop symptoms of Covid-19 during your self-isolation period. If your test is negative, you must still complete your self-isolation period because the virus may not be detectable yet – this is crucial to avoid unknowingly spreading the virus.
- If your test is positive, you and other members of your household, unless they are exempt, must follow the rules in guidance and self-isolate for 10 days. This is in addition to the time you have already spent self-isolating.
- You and your household’s self-isolation period includes the day your symptoms started, or the day of your test if you did not have symptoms, and the next 10 full days. This means that if, for example, your symptoms started – or, if you did not have symptoms, you took your test – at any time on the 15th of the month, self-isolation period ends at 23:59 on the 25th.

You may find this [stay at home illustration useful](#).

### ***Exemptions from self-isolation for contacts***

You are not required to self-isolate if you are notified you have had close contact with someone with Covid-19 and any of the following apply:

- you are fully vaccinated
- you are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved Covid-19 vaccine trial
- you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

You are fully vaccinated 14 days after your final dose of an MHRA-approved vaccine that was administered in the United Kingdom. This is to allow for an antibody response to develop. If you were fully vaccinated at the time you had close contact with a positive case, you will not be required to self-isolate.

NHS Test and Trace will contact you to:

- let you know that you have been identified as a contact
- check whether you are legally required to self-isolate
- provide you with advice
- taking part in [twice weekly LFD testing](#)

### **Those recently turned 18**

Contacts will not be legally required to self-isolate regardless of their vaccination status if they are under 18. If you are 18 years old, the guidance is that you will be treated in the same way as those under 18 up until the age of 18 years and 6 months, to allow you time to become fully vaccinated.

## NHS APP

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[The NHS COVID-19 app](#), for England and Wales, [Scotland](#), [Northern Ireland](#) and [ROI](#)

### Six key features of the NHS App

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Introducing the [NHS COVID-19 app](#) [PDF].

#### Trace

For contact tracing, the app detects and logs other nearby app users using random unique IDs. If any of those users later test positive for coronavirus (Covid-19), you will receive an exposure alert with advice on what to do. If you are under 18, you are advised to show this alert to a trusted adult.

#### Alert

When you first register for the app you will be asked for the first half of your postcode. You can check the app every day to see whether where you live has become a high risk area for coronavirus. If it is, you will also receive a notification to let you know. This will help you make daily decisions to protect yourself and those you love.

#### Check in

The app allows you to record when you visit a venue by “checking-in” when you arrive, using the venue’s QR code.

The app records the time you spend at the venue without recording any personal information. You will receive an alert, if you have recently visited a venue where you have come into contact with coronavirus

#### Symptoms

If you feel unwell, you can use the app to check if your symptoms could be related to coronavirus (Covid-19). The app will give you a list of potential symptoms and you can then choose the ones that apply to you. It will then tell you if your symptoms suggest you have coronavirus.

#### Test

If you have coronavirus symptoms, the app will take you to a website where you can book a test to see if you have coronavirus or not.

#### Isolate

If you have been advised by the app to self-isolate, the app provides a countdown timer so that you can keep track of how long you need to self-isolate. When you reach the end of your self-isolation period, the app will send you a notification reminder with a link to the latest advice for you. If you are under 18, you are advised to show this message to a trusted adult.

