Asking for a test to check if you have coronavirus

If you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), you can ask for a test to check if you have the virus. This is called an antigen test.

There is another type of test (antibody test) that checks if you've already had the virus. This test is not available yet.

If you need medical advice about your symptoms:

England: NHS 111 online coronavirus service

Who can ask for a test

You can ask for a test:

- for yourself, if you have coronavirus symptoms now (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste)

- for someone you live with, if they have coronavirus symptoms

  This service is for people in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

> **Important**
>
> Please help the NHS and only ask for a test if you or someone you live with has symptoms now.

The tests are not suitable for children under 5 years old.

When to ask for a test

You need to have the test in the first 5 days of having symptoms.

Help with asking for a test

If you're having problems getting a test, see answers to common questions about asking for a coronavirus test.

It's best to ask for the test in the first 3 days, as it may take a day or two to arrange.

What the test involves

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 or someone can do it for you.

Will I get a test?

There is very high demand for tests at the moment.

People in hospital and essential workers, including NHS and social care staff, are getting priority.

Even if you are successful in requesting a test, we cannot guarantee you will get one. It depends on how many tests are available each day in different parts of the country.

How do I ask for a test?

You can ask for a test online - https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test