The availability of free national testing for COVID-19 in England includes those *with symptoms* who are "essential workers" and "any worker who needs to leave home to travel to work and cannot work from home".

Government guidance on who can be tested was **updated** at the end of April to include:

- all 'essential workers*' with symptoms
- anyone who goes to work because they cannot work from home (e.g. site construction workers and those doing essential site maintenance and emergency work) and who has symptoms
- anyone with symptoms of coronavirus who lives with any of those above.

Testing aims to show whether (or not) a person with symptoms currently has COVID-19. There is currently no UK validated test for antibodies that might indicate some level of COVID-19 immunity (the national testing being made available is not a test for immunity).

Applying for testing

An online portal enables applications for appointments at one of many drive-through testing sites across the country (results within 48 hours) or to receive a home testing kit (results within 72 hours after test collection).

There are two routes to arranging a test: employer and self-referral. Employers can refer their employees for a test, using a login obtained by emailing **portalservicedesk@dhsc.gov.uk** and giving their business name, nature of the business, region, and names and email addresses for two site users.

The developments above apply in England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own testing criteria. See below for information regarding:

- **Wales**
- **Northern Ireland**

Essential workers
All 'essential workers' *in England* who are self-isolating - and members of their households - are eligible for a coronavirus test. The list of essential workers *includes* (but is by no means restricted to):

Utilities and communication
Staff for the electricity, oil, gas and water sectors, information technology and data infrastructure sector, plus key staff working in nuclear, chemicals and telecomms (including

network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999/111 critical services).

Public safety and national security
Police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians and contractors (critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the COVID-19 response), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, and those maintaining border security.

Transport
Those keeping air, road and rail passenger and freight transport operating, including those working on transport systems.

*[**Click here for the *definitive list* of essential workers for the purpose of testing >**](#)

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