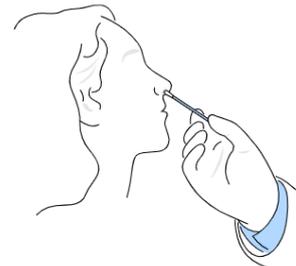


Coronavirus (COVID-19) Tests – Information for Kidney Patients

There are 2 types of Coronavirus tests, which tell us different things.

1. Swab test (sometimes called PCR or Antigen test) – do I have Coronavirus infection?

- This checks if you have **active Coronavirus infection**.
- A swab is inserted into your nose and/or your throat to take a sample of the secretions, then sent to the lab for processing. It can be uncomfortable but it is not painful or dangerous.
- It usually takes 24-48 hours for the result to be available.



When should I be tested?

- If you have symptoms of Coronavirus, eg. fever, persistent cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, new aches in the muscles.
- If you are advised to be tested as you have been in close contact with someone with Coronavirus, eg. a patient on the same dialysis shift/day as you (see **“Test and trace”**). Sometimes it is also done in the recovery phase after Coronavirus infection to see if the virus is still detectable.

What does the result mean?

- **A positive result means that you have Coronavirus infection.**
 - You must stay at home for at least 7 days if you are well.
 - You should seek medical help if you are feeling more unwell.
 - Everyone in your household must self-isolate for 14 days.
- **A negative result**
 - Usually means you did not have Coronavirus on the day that the test was done.
 - You could still get Coronavirus infection in the future.

What should I do if I have a negative test result?

- You can stop self-isolating if you test negative, as long as:
 - Everyone you live with who has Coronavirus symptoms also tests negative.
 - You feel well
- You must keep self-isolating if
 - Someone in your home tests positive (you may still get Coronavirus infection)
 - Someone in your home has symptoms and has not been tested, or is awaiting test results
 - You have diarrhoea or you're being sick - stay at home until 48 hours after they've stopped
- If you still feel unwell or your condition is worsening, seek medical help as you may have something else wrong with you which needs treatment.

Does a negative result always mean that I don't have Coronavirus infection?

- A small number of kidney patients have an illness typical of Coronavirus but have a negative swab result.
 - This is more likely if you take medication to suppress your immune system, for example steroids or antirejection medicines for a kidney transplant.
 - We are still learning about this type of illness, and the Coronavirus Antibody test (see below) may be helpful in this situation.
- **It is always best to be cautious – if you feel unwell, please seek advice from your kidney unit as you may need further tests or treatment.**

I had coronavirus infection and my swab tests are still positive after at least 2 weeks – what does this mean?

- This is happening in a small number of kidney patients.
- If you are feeling well, you do not need to worry.
- As Coronavirus is a new disease, we still don't know exactly what this means or whether you could still pass on the virus to others.
- It is best to discuss this with your kidney doctor, who may need to ask infection specialists for advice.

2. The Coronavirus blood (Antibody) test

- This is a blood test either from your vein or finger-prick.
- It tests if your immune system is making proteins (antibodies) to fight the Coronavirus.
- Antibodies usually develop about 7-14 days after infection starts.



What does the result mean?

- **If your antibody test is positive:**
 - This means you have already had Coronavirus infection.
 - You may be recovering or have already recovered.
 - Don't worry if you do not remember having any symptoms, this is quite common.
 - We do not know how much protection these antibodies give you against another Coronavirus infection.
 - We do not know how long protection may last, so the test may be repeated every few weeks or months.
 - You should still follow current guidance on social distancing and self-isolation.
- **If your antibody test is negative:**
 - This means you do not have any antibodies to Coronavirus.

- You probably haven't had previous infection with Coronavirus.
- If your symptoms started within the last 14 days, it may be too early to detect antibodies – it may be helpful to have a repeat antibody test in 1-2 weeks.
- You do not have any protection against Coronavirus and should continue to follow guidance on social distancing and self-isolation.

Is the Antibody test always accurate?

- As COVID-19 is a new disease, tests are not yet as accurate as we would like.
- New test kits are being developed by various different biotechnology companies.
- We don't yet know which ones are most reliable, so some tests may give different results from others.
- If the test result is likely to affect decisions about your treatment, it may be repeated after a few weeks or months.

I would like to have an antibody test, should I buy a test from the internet?

- It is best not to do this as test kits available on the internet may not be reliable.
- Tests are likely to be possible on the NHS in your area very soon.
- It is best to talk to your kidney team as they may be able to arrange for you to have an antibody test.

What should I do if I have been contacted by NHS "Test and Trace" to have a test?

The NHS "Test and Trace" service has been set up to limit the spread of Coronavirus. When a positive case is identified, anyone who has been a "close contact" will be advised to self-isolate for 14 days. A "close contact" is anyone who was within a 2 metre distance of you for at least 15 minutes.

If you have regular haemodialysis treatment, a "close contact" may include a patient who had dialysis at the same time as you even if they were not within 2 metres of you.

It can take up to 14 days to get Coronavirus after you have been in contact with an infected person - even if you feel well, you must follow instructions to protect the people around you, including your family and other kidney patients.

If you are advised by NHS "Test and Trace" that you are a close contact of a case of COVID-19:

- You must self-isolate at home for 14 days since contact.
- **You must inform your kidney unit immediately if**
 - You have regular haemodialysis or peritoneal dialysis – this must continue.
 - You have a planned hospital treatment within 14 days
 - Your appointment should be done in isolation conditions or delayed.
 - You may need a Coronavirus swab test
 - You have a planned hospital appointment within 14 days
 - Your appointment should be done by phone or in isolation conditions.

- If you develop symptoms, contact [NHS 111 online coronavirus service](#) to arrange for a swab test, or phone 119 if you cannot use the online service.
- If your test is positive, you need to self-isolate for at least 7 days.
- If your test is negative, you need to continue to self-isolate for 14 days.
- If you develop new symptoms after a negative swab, you need to be tested again.

Please note – advice on Coronavirus tests and what they mean may change as we learn more about the virus. Please consult the latest version of this advice on the Kidney Care UK website.

For current government guidance on COVID-19, visit <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

If you are concerned about your health, please contact NHS 111 or your kidney team for further advice.

Review date 1st September 2020.