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Press release

Everyone in the United Kingdom with symptoms now eligible for coronavirus tests

Everyone in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms can now get a test.

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From:

Department of Health and Social Care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care>)



- Anyone experiencing a new, continuous cough; high temperature; and now also a loss of or change in your normal sense of smell or taste can book a test by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>)
- 21,000 contact tracers in England now recruited

The government has today announced that anyone with symptoms of coronavirus is now eligible to book a test, ahead of the rollout of the test and trace service.

The expansion in testing eligibility comes after all 4 UK Chief Medical Officers confirmed that anosmia has been added as a symptom of COVID-19. Anosmia is the loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell, and it can also affect your sense of taste.

This means people should self-isolate immediately if they have:

- a new, continuous cough
- a high temperature, or
- a loss of or change in their normal sense of smell or taste

All members of their household must also self-isolate according to current guidelines, unless the symptomatic individual receives a negative test result.

Testing

The extension in testing eligibility comes ahead of the rollout of the new test and trace service and is possible thanks to increased testing capacity across the country as the government expands total testing capacity towards 200,000 tests a day.

The government has more than doubled the capacity of the NHS/Public Health England (PHE) laboratory network, set up 50 regional test centres and 116 mobile testing units, and introduced home testing kits and 3 Lighthouse laboratories.

The number of tests available for the general population will increase as capacity continues to expand.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Following the massive ramping up of our national testing programme, anybody with symptoms of coronavirus in the United Kingdom is now eligible for a test.

This is a huge step forward in our plan to slow the spread of the virus, protect the NHS and give the peace of mind these tests can bring.

We will continue to give priority to NHS staff and care home residents and workers in order to protect our most vulnerable.

The tracing element of the service in England, due to be launched shortly, will be supported by 21,000 contact tracers who have now been recruited, and will play a vital role working to reach those who have been in close contact with someone who has developed coronavirus.

The new workforce in England of more than 21,000 contract tracers will be overseen by experts from Public Health England and local government.

PHE Deputy Chief Executive Richard Gleave said:

Test and trace will require a huge team effort bringing together PHE and local government leaders, experts in logistics and thousands of new staff to carry out contact tracing. It's great to see people from a wide range of disciplines coming forward to play their part.

NHS Professionals' CEO Nicola McQueen said:

We have seen a fantastic response to join the virtual frontline of home-based clinical contact caseworkers for the test and trace service. This service is key to the national response to COVID-19. We know that so many of our bank members, as well as other registered healthcare professionals, are keen to help in any way they can and this unique position will allow them to do just that.

Background information

Anyone in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland experiencing a new, continuous cough, high temperature or a loss of or change in your normal sense of smell or taste can book a test by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>).

Those unable to access the internet can call 119 in England and Wales or 0300 303 2713 in Scotland and Northern Ireland to book a test.

A team of PHE public health professionals, linking with the local government sector and other partners, will oversee the contact tracing workforce as well as continuing to manage complex cases.

PHE is working with local government colleagues including the Association of Directors of Public Health, Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, Local Government Association and UK Chief Environmental Health Officers on this part of the test and trace service.

NHS Professionals, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Business Services Authority are key partners in delivery of the model helping with recruitment, logistics and integration of the various elements of the service.

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- Foreign Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 18 May 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-18-may-2020>)
- Prime Minister's article in the Mail on Sunday: 17 May 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-article-in-the-mail-on-sunday-17-may-2020>)
- Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 21 May 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/health-and-social-care-secretarys-statement-on-coronavirus-covid-19-21-may-2020>)

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