Frequently asked questions for staff screening/testing

Why am I being screened?

You are being offered a test for COVID-19 as part of the Scottish Government's programme of weekly screening of asymptomatic care home staff.

Some people who test positive for COVID-19 have no symptoms or have yet to develop symptoms. We are now screening staff without symptoms so those who have COVID-19 may be identified. Staff who test positive will then need to isolate to reduce the risk of the infection being passed on to others.

Weekly staff testing is only for people who have no symptoms of COVID-19 and must not be used if you have symptoms. Staff members who become symptomatic should self-refer for testing via the online SALUS occupational health service portal for symptomatic staff and household contacts – https://covid19staffscreening.salus.co.uk/

Do I have to take part in screening?

Screening is not compulsory, but it is important to reduce the risk of transmission of infection to residents and other staff members. Please inform your line manager if you do not want to participate.

What does screening involve?

Screening involves a nose and throat swab. Swabs will be delivered to the care home and self-sampling is required. Colleagues can watch a short video clip about obtaining an upper respiratory tract sample – visit: https://bit.ly/2NbiH2H. If you are unable to do this for yourself a colleague wearing appropriate PPE can help you.

How will I find out my result?

You will receive your result directly by SMS or email. Test results will take up to 72 hours from time of sample.

Staff are required to inform the care home manager of their results (positive and negative) as soon as these are received. Care home managers will receive results directly for staff who are screened through the SALUS occupational health service.

What does the result mean?

You can continue to work whilst awaiting your test result as long as you do not have symptoms and stringent infection prevention and control measures are in place, including the appropriate use of PPE.

If your result is negative you can continue to work as long as you do not have symptoms.

If your result is positive:

- You will be excluded from work to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of screening
- You can return to work after 10 days, as long as you have not developed any symptoms
- If you become symptomatic during the isolation period, then:
    - ➢ Re-start the 10 days exclusion from the date of onset of symptoms
    - ➢ Do not return to work until the full exclusion period is complete (including 48 hours without a fever)
- Your household member(s) must follow 'stay at home' advice and self-isolate for 14 days from the date you were screened or, if they develop symptoms at any time, for a minimum of 10 days from the onset of their symptoms
- You will be contacted by the Test and Protect Service (see below)

For further information please visit the coronavirus section of www.nhsinform.scot

Does a negative result mean that I don't have COVID-19?

In the majority of cases, screening tests are accurate. It is important to note, however, that a negative result may mean that the test was unable to detect the virus in your nose and throat on the day that you were screened. That does not rule out the possibility that you already had the infection at that time but before the test was able to detect it. Nor does it rule out the possibility that you may have acquired the infection since the test was performed.

For these reasons, if you develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any time, you will still need to self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days from the start of your symptoms.

Even if your test result is negative and you remain asymptomatic, stringent infection prevention and control measures and appropriate use of PPE are vital.

There is also a risk of a weak or false positive result. The Health Protection Team have made provision to mitigate this and will obtain the relevant information from you to allow your test result to be interpreted appropriately. You may need to be retested if advised by the Health Protection Team.

Do I need to be tested again if I previously tested positive?

Staff who have previously tested positive for Covid-19 are exempt from being retested through the weekly staff testing programme for a period of 90 days from their initial illness onset (or date of positive test if asymptomatic), **unless they develop new possible COVID-19 symptoms, in which case they will need to be retested**. This is because fragments of inactive virus can be persistently detected in respiratory tract samples for some time following infection. After 90 days from initial illness onset (or date of positive test if asymptomatic), staff should re-enter the weekly testing programme. If found to be positive, you may be considered as a possible new infection.

Will I get paid if I have to self-isolate?

The Scottish Government has committed to meeting all reasonable additional care home provider costs as a result of COVID-19. Providers are strongly encouraged to continue to employ and pay staff, including for absence related to COVID-19.

What is the Test and Protect Service?

Test and Protect is a national service that aims to identify who has COVID-19 and who they have had close, recent contact with, in order to break the chain of infection and stop the spread. If you test positive for COVID-19, a contact tracer will contact you by telephone and carry out an interview. You should already be self-isolating at home.

The contact tracer will ask questions to identify who you have had contact with in the two days prior to and seven days after your positive test. The contact tracer will then determine if a named contact is a close contact. The contact tracer will then call your close contact who will be advised to isolate for 14 days from the date of their contact with you.

What should I do if I become symptomatic?

Screening identifies presence of the virus at the point the swab is taken. If you later become symptomatic you must stay off work for a minimum of 10 days and can get tested via the SALUS occupational health service portal at https://covid19staffscreening.salus.co.uk/

If staff members are concerned about symptoms, they should follow the guidance available at www.nhsinform.scot and contact 111 for advice.

What are the symptoms of the coronavirus?

The most common symptoms of coronavirus are a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature (37.8C or greater) and/or loss of, change in, normal sense of taste or smell.

Care home staff should also be aware that older adults may present with atypical symptoms and should be alert to any change in a resident's usual behaviour or clinical presentation (of any severity). This may include: delirium, falls, lethargy, malaise, functional decline, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting and reduced appetite.

What can I do to protect myself from coronavirus or reduce the risk of spreading the virus?

- Continue with good infection prevention and control, including appropriate use of PPE.
- Good hand and respiratory hygiene. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Self-isolate if you have symptoms and do not attend work.
- Avoiding direct contact with people that have a respiratory illness and avoid using their personal items such as their mobile phone.
- No staff member should enter the care home if they have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Practice physical (social) distancing in the workplace and minimise close contact with colleagues wherever possible. This is particularly applicable to break times and social events out with the workplace. More information is on the NHS inform website.
- If taking public transport to and from work, it's imperative you adhere to advice on face coverings. See the Scottish Government website for more information.
- You should try not to share a vehicle with those outside your household or social bubble. If you need to, ensure face coverings are worn by driver and all passengers, windows are open for ventilation and there is maximum distance between all driver/passengers, making best use of seating. Clean your car between journeys using standard cleaning products - making sure you clean door handles and other areas that people may touch.

For more information see www.nhsinform.scot