

COVID-19 Guidance

from Thursday 24th February 2022

Asymptomatic Testing

From 21 February 2022, regular twice weekly testing (3 to 4 days apart) with an LFT is only advised to continue for:

- Staff and students of secondary age in specialist educational needs and disability (SEND) settings, alternative provision settings, and SEND units in mainstream
- schools or the equivalent in colleges (this is not mandatory but strongly recommended).
- Staff and students of secondary age in open and secure children's homes, foster carers'. Children and young people arriving in secure children's homes should test on arrival.

Local public health team may temporarily recommend lateral flow device (LFD) tests for staff and students of secondary age if an outbreak occurs in any setting.

Symptomatic Testing

If any staff or pupils display any of the main COVID-19 symptoms they should order a PCR test (until 31 March 2022 as free testing will end on 1 April 2022).

The current advice is that they should stay at home and avoid contact with other people while you are waiting for the test result.

Pregnancy

Continue to undertake the usual mandatory risk assessment for pregnant workers as soon as you are aware of a pregnancy. There is no expectation that a pregnant employee should work from home unless medical advice requires such consideration.

Individuals who test positive via LFT or PCR

Although the legal requirement to isolate is ending, adults and pupils who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days.

Although there is no legal requirement for staff to inform their employer if they test positive, all staff should follow the Trust's Sickness Absence Management policy and are strongly encouraged to inform their employer. This obligation should be presented as a moral duty to protect colleagues and pupils in our care.

If an employee is off due to being infected with Covid 19 the period of absence is no longer to be discounted from the usual sickness absence monitoring and Trust absence triggers. Instead, such absences should be included in your usual monitoring and management of sickness absences.

Close Contacts

Contacts are no longer required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests, and routine contact tracing has ended – staff and pupils who are close contacts should attend their education settings as usual. This includes staff who have been in close contact within their household. The legal requirement has been removed for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.

Bubbles and Mixing Restrictions

This is not an option going forward.

Summary of the Government 'Living with COVID' Guidance

from 21 February 2022 the Government is:

Removing the guidance for staff and students in most education and childcare settings to undertake twice-weekly asymptomatic testing.

from 24 February 2022 the Government will:

- Remove the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days.
- No longer ask fully vaccinated close contacts and those aged under 18 to test daily for 7 days, and remove the legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.
- End self-isolation support payments, national funding for practical support and the medicine delivery service will no longer be available.
- End routine contact tracing. Contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests.
- End the legal obligation for individuals to tell their employers when they are required to self-isolate.
- Revoke The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations.

from 24 March 2022, the Government will:

- Remove the COVID-19 provisions within the Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance Regulations.

from 1 April 2022, the Government will:

- Update guidance setting out the ongoing steps that people with COVID-19 should take to minimise contact with other people. This will align with the changes to testing.
- No longer provide free universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public in England.
- Consolidate guidance to the public and businesses, in line with public health advice.
- Remove the health and safety requirement for every employer to explicitly consider COVID-19 in their risk assessments.
- Replace the existing set of 'Working Safely' guidance with new public health guidance.