

Symptom-free testing: frequently asked questions

What is symptom-free testing?	Symptom-free testing involves the regular testing of people who work outside the home. It is designed to identify and isolate people who do not know they are carrying the virus in order to protect both workplace colleagues and local communities.
Who is eligible?	All workers and volunteers in public-facing roles, who cannot work from home, and who do not have access to workplace testing through their employer, are eligible to be tested.
If I'm eligible for a test does it mean that I'm also eligible for a vaccination?	No. The symptom-free testing programme is operated separately from the vaccination programme. If you are eligible for a test, it does not mean you are eligible for a COVID vaccination. Those people who are eligible for a vaccination will be contacted individually by the NHS.
How do I book an appointment?	You can book an appointment online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/symptomfreetesting
Where are the testing centres and when are they open?	Tests are available at three sites in Oxfordshire: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spiceball Leisure Centre in Banbury (OX16 2BW) • The Beacon in Wantage (OX12 9BX) • King's Centre in Oxford (OX2 0ES) You can find the opening hours and location of each testing site on our interactive map .
Is parking available at the test centres?	Yes, a limited amount of parking is available at all three centres. Please park considerately when you arrive.
Why were the testing centre locations chosen, and will there be any more locations?	Three locations have been selected in different parts of the county to enable people to choose the most convenient location for them. We will assess whether further locations are required in due course, alongside other delivery models such as mobile or pop-up facilities.
What do I need to bring with me to the testing centre?	You will need to bring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your test booking confirmation – either on your phone or a printed copy. • A face covering – you will need to wear one at all times except when you do your swab test. • A smartphone, if you have one, as this will help speed up the registration process. If you do not have a smartphone, staff will be able to register you onsite.
How do I amend or cancel my booking?	You can change or cancel your booking by clicking on the link at the bottom of your booking confirmation.
How often do I need to get tested?	We recommend you get tested once a week even if you have been vaccinated. This will help pick up a COVID-19 infection early and reduce the risk to others.
How long does the test take?	It takes less than 15 minutes to administer the test.
How long does it take to get the result?	The test produces a result within an hour.
How are the tests processed?	Lateral flow devices do not require a laboratory to process the test, but the results are processed on-site. Swabbing and processing of these tests must currently be conducted at a dedicated testing site by trained personnel.

What happens if I test positive?	If the result is positive, you will be told to self-isolate and follow the national guidance. A self-isolation information pack has been prepared to provide you with advice and sources of support.
What happens if I test negative?	If the result is negative, you must still continue to follow social distancing guidelines, wear a mask in public and regularly wash your hands. Even with a negative result, you may still have the virus so please take every precaution.
Do I need to attend the same testing site for each weekly test?	No. You can choose to book at whichever site is most convenient for you.
What happens if I develop COVID-like symptoms between my weekly tests?	If at any point you experience COVID-19 symptoms – such as a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to sense of smell or taste – you should book a COVID test through the main national system by visiting gov.uk or by calling NHS 119.
How many different types of this technology are out there and what's the difference between them?	There are two main types of test used to check if people currently have COVID-19. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first type of test is known as a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and looks for the genetic material of the virus – this test is used predominantly for people who have COVID symptoms. • The second is called a lateral flow antigen test (LFT), which looks for parts of the surface of the virus – this test is used predominantly for people who do not have COVID symptoms.
Are LFTs less accurate than PCR tests?	Lateral flow and PCR tests have different characteristics and different uses. PCR tests are more sensitive but, as they require a laboratory to process results, they are slower. They are therefore better suited to specific cases, such as those showing symptoms. While LFTs have lower sensitivity, they can give us results much faster. As such, they allow us to test far larger numbers of people showing no symptoms and get them their test result faster. This will enable us to capture a large percentage of people who are infected and infectious, but unaware of the fact they are possibly spreading COVID-19.
Do people have to take the test?	No, it is by invitation. But we hope that those asked will take part.
Will people be paid to take tests?	No
Who should I contact if I have any questions?	Please email us at Asymptomatic.testingenquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk