

Self-Isolation FAQs

Summary of changes from 6 January

Positive cases are advised to self-isolate for 10 days. However, if the individual returns two consecutive negative LFD tests taken at least 24 hours apart with the first test no earlier than day 6 they may end isolation before the end of the 10 day period if they have no fever.

Close contacts who are fully vaccinated, having received 3 doses of the vaccination (plus 14 days) or are aged under 18 years and 4 months, can take daily LFD tests for 7 days instead of isolation - provided the tests are negative and they remains without symptoms. If someone has not received 3 doses of the vaccination, they will need to book a PCR test and even if this is a negative result, they will need to isolate for 10 days.

Advice on confirmatory PCR tests where people test positive on a lateral flow device (LFD) test they are now not advised to get a PCR test to confirm infection but to follow isolation advice as it applies to them as a positive case – *there is an exception for people who may be eligible for the Self-Isolation Support Grant who are advised to take a PCR test to ensure they can confirm their infection to be potentially eligible for financial support.*

Testing

I have symptoms of Covid-19, do I need to book a PCR test or do an LFD test?

- PCR and LFD tests work in different ways to identify people who have COVID-19 infection. If you have any symptoms – a new continuous cough, high temperature or loss/change of taste/smell - you should book a PCR test as soon as a slot is available.

What are LFD tests for?

- You should use an LFD test twice a week and prior to travelling and socialising with non-household members and vulnerable individuals. LFDs can be used to end isolation early a positive case if you return two consecutive negative LFD tests taken at least 24 hours apart with the first test no earlier than day 6 and provided you have no fever. They can also provide a safe alternative to isolation if you are a contact who has received your booster vaccination, or you are aged under 18 years and 4 months. You will no longer have to isolate, but can use daily LFDs for 7 days to keep checking for any infection that may be incubating.

If I have symptoms, does my household need to isolate whilst I wait my PCR results?

Some of your household may need to isolate. If they are not fully vaccinated, they will need to isolate. If they are a fully vaccinated adult or under 18 years and 4

months, they do not need to isolate as long as they continue to return daily negative LFDs until the test result is received and follow appropriate guidance thereafter.

My PCR was positive, what should members of my household do?

- All household members who have symptoms should isolate immediately and book a PCR test.
- Fully vaccinated household members (three doses with a final dose at least 14 days ago) and household members aged under 18 years and 4 months may take 7 daily LFD tests as an alternative to isolation so long as they do not have symptoms and test negative each day;
- Anyone aged over 18 years 4 months who has less than three vaccine doses should book a PCR test and, even if negative, isolate for 10 days.

I have a continuous cough but can't get a PCR slot – what do I do?

- You may have to wait a little longer than you normally would, given the demand. You should keep trying as new slots become available on the booking portal throughout the day. We've prioritised essential workers for on-site appointments, as well as those at highest risk and eligible for new treatments. You should continue to self-isolate until you receive your PCR test result.

How long will it be before I get my PCR test results?

- Test results are usually returned within 24 to 48 hours, however during times of high demand turnaround times are generally within 72 hours.

I have tested positive on a LFD test but have no symptoms, do I need a follow up PCR?

- Given the current high incidence and prevalence rates, there is no longer a requirement to book a PCR test to confirm the LFD positive result. You should only book a confirmatory PCR if the individual, parent/guardian or carer is planning on applying for the Self-Isolation Support Grant. Eligibility for the grant is that a person earns less than the real living wage, is asked by Test and Protect to isolate and will lose income as a result of isolating.

Where can I get LFD tests?

- LFD tests can be collected at a local pharmacy, collection point, regional and local test sites and can also be ordered online for home delivery. To find out where, please see [here](#).

Do I have to report my LFD positive result?

- Yes, it is crucial you report your test result online as soon as possible, positive or negative. This enables us to understand the prevalence of COVID-19 in the country and, for those with positive results, so the correct advice can be given to you and those you've been in close contact with, to prevent onward spread

of coronavirus. This only takes a few minutes to do and you can report tests for the current day and the previous day.

I've heard LFDs aren't as reliable as PCRs and you sometimes get false positives – how effective actually are LFDs?

- LFD tests have shown themselves to be a very effective and reliable public health tool in stopping spread of the virus. LFDs have estimated specificity of at least 99.97%, meaning that fewer than 3 in every 10,000 tests will result in a false positive result.

My child is under 5 years old, do they need to do a test if they're identified as a close contact?

- Under 5 year olds are encouraged but not required to take a test.

I've been identified as a close contact, but I've had a positive PCR in the last 90 days, should I test?

- If you have tested positive on a PCR test within the last 90 days you should take an LFD instead of a PCR test.

Self-Isolation

I'm on day 5 of isolation as an index case and I have returned a negative LFD. If I take another on day 6 can I leave isolation early, as long as they're 24 hours apart?

- No, you will only be eligible to end isolation as an index case early if your LFD tests are taken after day 6, taken 24 hours apart, are negative and provided you do not have a fever.

What does fully vaccinated mean now for the purposes of self-isolation policy?

- Fully vaccinated now means an individual having received *both* primary doses and a booster dose of an MHRA approved vaccine, plus 14 days for protection to build. You need to have been fully vaccinated by the time the contact occurred, e.g. if the case is in your house you need to have been boosted 14 days before their onset of symptoms.

Why are 2 doses now not enough to be eligible to end isolation early as a close contacts?

- Whilst 2 doses of the vaccination do provide some level of protection in relation to Omicron, we know that the booster programme offers much higher level of protection than 2 doses of the vaccine. More than 90% of COVID cases in Scotland are now confirmed as Omicron. Given ongoing transmission risk and the need to dampen transmission, 3 doses of the vaccination for individuals is essential to achieving this. Two doses is no longer enough.

For further guidance on self-isolation, please visit [NHS Inform](#).

Are there different rules for household close contacts and non-household close contacts?

- No, following the policy change, we do not differentiate between household and non-household close contacts.

I have just finished a period of self-isolation as a non-vaccinated close contact – what happens if I’m identified as a close contact again?

- You may be asked by Test and Protect to self-isolate and book a test again if you are identified again as a close contact of another person who is a confirmed case. It is possible that people will have to self-isolate more than once – perhaps multiple times – if they are identified as a close contact of separate cases on several different occasions. The best way to reduce the likelihood of being asked to self-isolate is to get your third dose of the vaccine.

I need support whilst I’m self-isolating – what is available?

- Workers who earn less than the real living wage and have been asked to isolate by Test and Protect may be eligible for the £500 Self-Isolation Support Grant. Practical support such as food or essential medicine deliveries are available through the local self-isolation assistance service, and the national Coronavirus helpline – available at 0800 111 4000, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm – to ensure people required to self-isolate have the support they need.

Is there a limit on how many times I can apply for the Self-Isolation Support Grant?

- No. Individuals can claim more than once as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim. However, a claim cannot be made more than once for the same period if periods of self-isolation overlap. The initial 10 day self-isolation period must be completed first, before a new claim can be made. Any continuous period of more than 10 days will only enable one Self-Isolation Grant. Provision outside that may lie with other social security benefits.

I meet the criteria to end isolation early, is there anything else I should be doing as a precaution?

- You should avoid all non-essential contact with people outside your household, wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces, limiting contact with anyone who is at highest risk including not visiting people in care homes or hospitals (unless essential and agreed with care home or hospital staff in advance) until 10 days after contact with a positive case. You should continue to take part in twice weekly LFD testing for the general population (beyond any required LFD tests in what would have been your isolation period).

Are there any exemptions to self-isolation close contacts policy?

- There are no exemptions for unvaccinated close contacts, all of these individuals will need to self-isolate for 10 days. However, those who are medically unable to be vaccinated or participating in vaccine trials are eligible for the contact self-isolation exemption in line with the fully vaccinated population.

Why do you specify 18 years and 4 months as the cut-off point before being viewed as an adult?

- As the majority of under 18s are not currently offered a booster setting this age range at 18 years and 4 months ensures that people turning 18 have sufficient time to get their booster once they are eligible.

Critical National Infrastructure exemption

Previously, I was allowed to return to work as a close contact due to the critical national infrastructure self-isolation exemption – does this still apply?

- The CNI exemption scheme has now closed as the wider population changes introduced effectively replicate the exemption enabled by the CNI scheme. During its time of operation, the scheme was vital in ensuring that specific critical national industries were able to operate with the requirements around testing and risk ensuring this was balanced with the health and clinical risks to individuals in the workforce.

Evidence

Why are the Scottish Government making these changes?

- We have been considering the current trends in infection and progress with the booster programme carefully, alongside clinical experts. These changes have been made, cautiously, given the high percentage of population protection against COVID-19 due to the booster programme and the evidence showing strong reliability of LFD tests at detecting any level of COVID-19 infection and at detecting those most infectious

With record high cases numbers, isn't this policy change a risk? What evidence is there behind this?

- The [UK Health Security Agency's modelling](#) suggests that a 7-day self-isolation period, when combined with 2 consecutive negative LFD tests starting on day 6 and taken 24 hours apart, has nearly the same impact on risk of an infectious individual being released from isolation as a 10-day self-isolation period without LFD testing. Risk is further mitigated by the need for the individual to have no fever before they end isolation