



ANTIBODY TESTING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an antibody test?

COVID-19 antibody testing (also known as SARS CoV-2 antibody test) is a blood test to look at whether the body has produced an immune response (antibodies) to the COVID-19 virus.

Antibodies develop in viral infections as part of the body's attempt to fight the virus. An antibody test can tell someone whether they have had the virus that causes COVID-19 in the past. The test works by taking a blood sample and testing for the presence of antibodies to the COVID-19 virus.

Why is the Government doing antibody testing?

Antibody testing at this stage is useful primarily to improve our understanding about the spread of the virus and does not mean that a person who has had COVID-19 will not catch the virus again in the future.

What do antibody test results mean?

A positive antibody test means that someone has developed antibodies to the virus. The presence of antibodies signals that the body has staged an immune response to the virus. This usually happens about two weeks after the first symptoms but may take up to six weeks following infection.

A negative test result does not completely rule out the possibility of previous infection with COVID-19 (SARS CoV-2). Samples from very early on in infection can produce negative results, so this test cannot be used to diagnose an acute (current) infection.

Also, over time following infection, antibody levels may decline and eventually become negative. People who are immunocompromised (have problems with their immune system) may make an antibody response to the COVID-19 infection very slowly or may not produce enough antibody for the test to become positive.

Can this antibody test tell me if I have an infection now or had a recent infection?

The test for antibodies is only reliable for detecting that you had the infection more than two weeks ago.

If you test positive for antibodies, can you ignore government guidance?

No. COVID-19 is a new disease, and our understanding of the body's immune response to it is limited. We do not know, for example, whether a positive antibody result means that you are protected from the disease and new infection, how long an antibody response lasts, or whether having antibodies means you can't transmit the virus to others. This means you could still pass the virus onto others, so you will need to keep using personal protective equipment, such as a mask, practice social distancing, and follow government guidelines.

How will I be told of the antibody test result?

You will be informed of your result via a text message to your mobile phone or to an email address, but it will vary depending on where you have your test.

How will my information be used?

Information about your test will be shared with Public Health England to help understand how the virus spreads and where it has been present in different regions of the country.

Will my employer be told about the result of my antibody test?

No, information about your test result will be only shared with you and Public Health England to help understand how the virus spreads and where it has been present in different regions of the country.

Am I allowed paid time off work to attend for a test?

Yes, it has been agreed that reasonable paid time off will be allowed in line with the Council's Time off for medical Appointments policy.

<http://intranet.smbc.loc/personnel/policies-and-procedures/working-hours-and-time-off/time-off-for-medical-appointments.aspx>

Are there any risks to having the antibody test?

There could be the usual minor risks related to having a blood test, such as bruising on your arm and feeling dizzy and faint during and after the test.

An extremely unlikely effect is swelling of the vein.

Will having the antibody test affect my life insurance?

There is no reason for life insurance to be affected. You can see more on this topic at: www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/your-health/covid-19-your-life-insurance

Why is the test only being offered to Adult Social Care Workers?

The Department of Health and Social Care are prioritising the antibody tests for people who work with older people and adults who are vulnerable.

Feedback

The team would really appreciate your feedback on your Antibody Testing experience. Please click on the link below to provide your feedback and help us to improve the service.

[Antibody Testing Service - Feedback Form](#)

Coronavirus symptoms

What should I do if I experience coronavirus symptoms?

If you do start showing the symptoms of coronavirus - a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste - it is essential you get a test immediately.

There are different ways to get a test in Sefton. There are drive through testing sites and walk through centre at both Bootle and Southport Town Hall. It's easy to make an appointment via www.nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119.

Test and Trace

What should I do if I am contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service?

If you are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service because you have been in close contact with someone who has the virus, you should self-isolate for 14 days.

You don't need to get tested unless you develop symptoms but even if you get a negative test result you still need to self-isolate because the virus can take 14 days to incubate.