

FACTSHEET: PARENTS

Information for parents on COVID-19 testing in secondary schools and further education colleges

Why is testing important?

We know that around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 don't have any symptoms, but can still pass the virus on.

Testing of staff and pupils who do not have symptoms is a vital part of keeping our schools and communities safe because people without symptoms could be carrying the virus and may spread it to others.

What is rapid testing?

- Simple and quick tests, known as Lateral Flow Device (LFD) tests are used to test people, without the need for a laboratory
- Rapid testing is for people who have **no symptoms** of coronavirus
- Rapid testing is really effective, alongside other COVID-19 safety measures
- To do the test, you wipe a swab (like a cotton bud) at the back of your throat and up your nose. It is a bit uncomfortable, but it does not hurt
- Swabbing and processing of the tests will be done in a safe space in the school or college and can then routinely be done at home – and the results are available in around 30 minutes.

How frequent are the tests?

- All secondary pupils and students, on their return to secondary schools and FE colleges, are advised to do three COVID-19 tests 3 – 5 days apart
- Once pupils have been tested 3 times at school, they will be provided with home test kits for regular testing
- All school staff will be tested twice a week.

What do parents need to know?

Participating is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Parents will need to give their consent for children under the age of 16.

Testing in schools

Students will be given the test kit and will do the test themselves. It is quick and easy. In some cases, younger children or children with special needs may be helped by a trained member of staff.

Testing at home

Pupils in secondary schools will be supplied with LFD test kits to self-swab and test themselves twice a week at home.

If the result is negative, the child/student can go into school but will still need to follow public health measures.

What happens when a child tests positive?

For most people their symptoms will be mild or they will have no symptoms at all.

If a child tests positive at school, the staff doing the testing will find a quiet space to talk with the pupil or student, being mindful of the need for social distancing/PPE.

The school will call their parent or legal guardian and arrange for the pupil to be collected or for permission to travel home safely on their own. They must avoid using public transport and should walk or cycle. If this is not possible, (for example if there is a long journey or if the child has complex needs) the parent can arrange for a private hire taxi with a screen.

The child or family may be anxious about their health and impact on their family and they will be reassured about the risks.

If the test was done at home they will also need to arrange a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the result. Get a test at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.

In both cases, if a child tests positive:

- The child and their close contacts will be required to self-isolate for 10 days
- If any of the close contacts go on to develop symptoms they should stay at home and get a test
- Get a test on www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119
- If anyone tests positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develop symptoms during the isolation period, they must restart the 10 day isolation period from the day they developed symptoms.

Getting support if you need to self-isolate

There is support available with learning from home and support for parents with work and benefits. You can contact your school with any questions. If you're worried about self-isolating for whatever reason, get in touch with Camden Council who can help you – 020 7974 4444 (option 9) or visit camden.gov.uk/support-for-individuals.

You can also organise a private meeting with your School Nurse who can speak to you about any concerns you have about coronavirus. For example, you may be worried about the impact on older relatives who live with you, or have concerns if you are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic group. For School Nurses, please email camdenschoolnurses@nhs.net or call 020 3317 2304.

