

Anyone receiving a positive lateral flow device test result should now complete a follow-up PCR test to confirm the result – see FAQs and responses below:

1. Why has this changed?

Although the vast majority of LFD test results are reliable, follow-up (confirmatory) PCR has been reintroduced as a precautionary measure to prevent people unnecessarily self-isolating on the basis of a false positive result from the LFD test. This is because the performance of LFD tests varies depending on how much coronavirus is circulating in the community. The test is more reliable when there is more coronavirus around. For a few months while coronavirus rates were very high, the requirement to have a follow-up PCR after a positive LFD test was suspended. Now that case rates have fallen again, it is necessary to confirm all positive LFD test results with the more reliable PCR test. The PCR test is also able to identify different variants of COVID-19, which is not possible with an LFD test.

2. What does ‘within two days’ mean in practice?

Within two days means the PCR should be taken on the day the LFD test was taken, the next day, or the following day.

Example: An LFD test returns a positive result early Monday morning on the 15th of the month. The person has the rest of Monday 15th, or Tuesday 16th, or Wednesday 17th to take a PCR in order to be eligible for the rescind function in the event of a negative result.

3. What happens if the PCR test is taken more than two days after the LFD test that was positive?

If the time period between the positive LFD test and the PCR test is more than two days, then a negative test result will not overturn a positive LFD test result.

4. How do I book a follow-up PCR test?

Book the PCR on the [NHS testing website](#). To get the fastest result, book a test at a local test centre rather than ordering home delivery.

5. Do cases and close contacts still need to isolate on the basis of a positive LFD test result?

Yes. Anyone who receives a positive LFD test result must isolate immediately. Their household contacts must also isolate immediately. For all LFD tests undertaken at a community testing site or approved workplace, NHS Test and Trace will contact the person who tested positive to inform them they must isolate and to gather details of anyone they have been in close contact with while infectious, who must also isolate.

6. Will close contacts be told if a follow-up PCR test is negative and they do not need to isolate?

Yes. Any close contacts provided to NHS Test and Trace will be automatically contacted if the follow-up PCR test is taken within two days and is negative.

7. What happens if contact tracing is happening within a school, workplace or other organisation and NHS Test and Trace are not involved?

Any organisations completing contact tracing themselves (e.g. schools and workplaces) should continue to follow the same process to identify and isolate any close contacts on the basis of a positive LFD test result. If the follow-up PCR test is taken within two days and is negative, then the individual and their close contacts should be contacted and advised that the requirement to self-isolate has been overturned.

8. Is there a legal requirement to get a confirmatory PCR test after a positive LFD test result?

There is no legal requirement for a follow-up PCR test. However, it is strongly advised because it will help prevent people unnecessarily self-isolating on the basis of a false positive result LFD test.