



7-Day Daily Testing of Contacts of Covid (DTCC): top lines and FAQs

Summary

From Tuesday 14 December, a new national Daily Testing of Contacts of Covid (DTCC) policy is being introduced. People who are fully vaccinated or children/young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months identified as a close contact of someone with Covid-19 – whether Omicron or not – should take an NHS rapid lateral flow test every day for seven days and continue to attend their setting as normal unless they have a positive test result. Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in DTCC.

Why is DTCC being implemented

- The practical move to introduce daily testing of contacts of covid comes as Omicron infections are rising significantly in the UK and it is expected to become the dominant strain in the UK by mid-December.
- DTCC will help protect the public by identifying asymptomatic cases early and helping to stop chains of transmission. Testing daily will also help us understand how and where the virus is spreading.
- Close contacts of people who test positive are at higher risk of getting Covid-19 and, with one in three people not having symptoms, DTCC will help ensure people are not unknowingly passing the virus on to others.

How this applies to education

- All eligible staff in education and childcare settings, and all students and pupils aged 5 and above are strongly advised to take seven daily LFD tests if they are identified by Test and Trace as a close contact of a confirmed positive case. It is strongly advised that the daily LFD test is taken before leaving the house for the first time each day.
- Participating in DTCC will be advisory but is strongly encouraged. This will help reduce transmission and support continued face-face education.
- The process for identifying contacts has not changed and will continue to be managed by NHS Test & Trace. Schools are not required to add to existing processes for recording test results but are encouraged to promote testing and reporting amongst staff, students, and pupils.
- DTCC includes primary age children identified as close contacts. This is because being identified as a close contact means a person is at higher risk of having Covid-19 and the additional testing will enable us to better identify infections at an earlier stage. Most LFD tests now only use nasal swabs which are less invasive for younger children. Parents of primary school children should order test kits via pharmacies or online [Find where to get rapid lateral flow tests - NHS \(test-and-trace.nhs.uk\)](https://www.test-and-trace.nhs.uk).

- Pupils with SEND identified as close contacts should be supported by their education setting and their families to agree the most appropriate route for testing including where appropriate additional support to assist swabbing.

How to access LFD test kits

- All staff in education settings, and pupils and students of secondary age and above should have access to a box of 7 LFD tests from their education settings if they do not have any at home.
- For primary aged children, LFD test kits are available through the usual routes either via local pharmacies, online or at community test sites. [Find where to get rapid lateral flow tests - NHS \(test-and-trace.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus/covid-19/testing/rapid-lateral-flow-tests/)
- If a setting requires additional test kits sooner than can be fulfilled via the standard ordering process, or will run out of test kits imminently, settings should contact 119 to request an emergency replenishment as a last resort.
- Regular twice weekly, at-home testing will continue on return in the spring term for all education and childcare workforce and all students of secondary age and above. If a setting remains open throughout the Christmas period, regular twice weekly at-home testing should continue throughout the holidays.

FAQs

What does daily testing for contacts of Covid-19 involve?

- Once notified by Test and Trace or the NHS Covid-19 app that they are a contact, all eligible staff and pupils/students should take a LFD test each day for 7 days (or ten days since your last known contact with the person who has since tested positive for Covid-19, if this is earlier than the 7 days), and report the results via the [Online Reporting System](#). It is advised that the daily LFD test is taken before leaving the house for the first time of that day. If they test negative, they should continue to attend their education setting, and they should follow national guidance and remain cautious around vulnerable people.
- If someone tests positive with an LFD test, they should self-isolate and order a PCR test to confirm the positive result: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-a-free-pcr-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus-covid-19). If the PCR test is positive, they must self-isolate in line with Government guidance (from the date of their positive LFD test result). If the PCR test is negative, they no longer need to self-isolate but they should continue to carry out the remainder of their daily tests.
- 18-year-olds will be given the opportunity to get fully vaccinated before being treated as adults. 6 months after their 18th birthday, they will be subject to the same rules as adults, therefore if they choose not to get vaccinated, they must self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

How does the government know it is safe for staff/students to be entering their education setting with daily testing?

- DTCC is based on the latest public health advice and strikes a balance between managing transmission risk and reducing disruption to children and young people's education. Rapid testing allows us to identify asymptomatic positive cases quickly so that those who test positive can self-isolate and help prevent the spread of the virus in education settings. This supports ensuring that staff, pupils and students can attend face-to-face education.
- The evidence is clear that being out of education causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. This harm disproportionately affects children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Research on daily testing from the summer (before the Omicron variant and based on daily testing on-site) showed it was as effective as self-isolation at keeping cases out of school, and much more effective at keeping children who were well in school.

Is daily testing as effective as isolation at stopping transmission of the virus?

- The public health advice supports the introduction of daily testing for vaccinated adults and children and young people aged 5 years to 18 years and six months. Research has shown that daily testing can be as effective as isolation in terms of reducing the transmission of covid-19.
- Research on daily testing from the summer (before the Omicron variant and based on daily testing on-site) showed it was as effective as self-isolation at keeping cases out of school, and much more effective at keeping children who were well in school.
- LFD testing is more suitable for testing on a daily basis because unlike PCR tests, LFD tests do not have to be sent to a laboratory for processing and the results are available much quicker. LFD results are available within 30 minutes.
- LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals and are approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Extensive clinical evaluation has been carried out on the lateral flow tests. Evaluations from UK Health Security Agency and the University of Oxford show these tests are accurate and sensitive enough to be used in the community for screening and surveillance purposes. There is evidence to support the use of LFD tests to detect the Omicron variant.

Should I take part in DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts if I have tested positive for Covid-19 in the last 90 days?

- Yes. Even if someone has tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days, if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19 and are exempt from isolation, they are strongly advised to take part in daily testing. If the LFD test is positive, they should also take a confirmatory PCR even if it is within the 90 days.

- This is a change to the previous position because we know people can be infected with Omicron even when they have had previous covid infection. Previously, we had evidence that people were likely to be immune for at least 90 days after infection, but we don't know whether this is the case with Omicron. With the removal of the requirement for self-isolation, we need another system to try to reduce transmission. Given that there is much less likelihood of false positives with LFDs when someone is no longer infectious, the balance of risks means that we need to implement this, even in the 90 days after previous infection.

Is taking part in DTCC voluntary?

- Participation in DTCC is voluntary although strongly encouraged. A staff member, pupil or student does not have to isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive case, are eligible for daily testing but choose not to participate.

Does DTCC for Covid-19 contacts replace testing twice-weekly for staff and secondary/college students?

- No, staff and students should continue testing twice-weekly for the rest of term and when settings return in January. DTCC should only be used when a member of staff, pupil or student has been identified as a Covid-19 contact.
- Only one LFD test should be taken in a day and the reporting process for all LFD tests is the same.

When should I take my daily LFD test?

- The LFD daily test should be taken before leaving the house for the first time of that day.

I have just finished my 7 days of DTCC, when should I start twice-weekly testing again?

- The twice-weekly testing routine should start again 3-4 days after a person has taken their last LFD test related to DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts.
- Only one LFD test should be taken a day, so a second test should not be taken on the same day if a person has tested that morning as part of their usual twice-weekly testing or if they have just finished taking part in DTCC cycle.
- If someone tests in the morning, and they are then identified as a close contact, they can consider the test taken that morning as their first DTCC test.

If a pupil, student or member of staff was identified as a close contact of an Omicron case before 14th December, are they eligible for DTCC or do they still need to self-isolate in line with the previous rules?

- If you are fully vaccinated or under 18 years and 6-month-old, and currently isolating due to being a contact of someone that has Omicron, you no longer

need to isolate. All contacts should take daily LFD tests for what would have been remainder of the isolation period.

Eligibility

Does daily testing for contacts only apply to contacts of the positive Omicron cases?

- No, daily testing is advised for all eligible contacts of a confirmed positive Covid-19 case whether omicron or not.

Who else is eligible?

The Government has introduced DTCC for those adults who are:

- fully vaccinated (those who have had two doses of an approved vaccine or more)
- people who can prove they are unable to be vaccinated for clinical reasons
- people taking part or who have taken part in an approved clinical trial for a Covid-19 vaccine

And for Children and young people aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, regardless of their vaccination status.

- Isolation requirements were introduced temporarily for contacts of confirmed Omicron cases whilst this variant of concern was emerging. Now, contacts of any confirmed Covid-19 case (unless they are under five or not eligible for some other reason), regardless of which variant, are instead being advised to undertake 7 daily LFD tests.
- Anyone over the age of 18 years and 6 months who is not vaccinated and not exempt, must isolate in line with [Government guidelines](#) if they are a contact of a positive case.

I've only had one vaccination dose, am I still eligible for DTCC?

- Adults need to be fully vaccinated (having had at least two doses of an approved vaccine) to be eligible for DTCC.
- Children and young people ages 5 years to 18 years and six months are eligible for DTCC, regardless of their vaccination status.
- Children under 5 are exempt from both DCTCC and isolation.

What if a member of staff, pupil or student becomes symptomatic whilst testing? Does this change their eligibility?

- If they become symptomatic and/or test positive on any of the LFD tests they take, they **should** self-isolate and order a symptomatic PCR test: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Contact tracing

How will individuals know if they are a close contact eligible for daily testing?

- NHS Test and Trace will work with the person who has tested positive (or their parent or guardian) to identify close contacts, based on a series of questions. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting Covid-19 due to the nature of the close contact. NHS Test and Trace will get in touch with the close contact and advise them on next steps.

How will settings know if their students or staff are close contacts?

- DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts should be triggered by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS Covid-19 app notifying someone that they have been identified as a close contact of a positive case.
- Settings will not necessarily be informed if one of their pupils, students or a staff member is identified as a close contact and asked to isolate or participate in DTCC and do not have a role in routine contact tracing or in monitoring uptake of DTCC.

Should settings play a role in contact tracing?

- As before, education and childcare settings are not expected to undertake routine contact tracing. In exceptional circumstances, settings may be contacted by local health protection teams in response to a local outbreak, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.
- If education or childcare settings are concerned about the number or a cluster of cases in their setting, they should contact their local Public Health Team (PHT) who may advise increased testing in line with the contingency framework: [Contingency framework: education and childcare settings – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/contingency-frameworks/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings)

Accessing test kits

How will identified contacts access LFD tests for DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts?

All staff and students of secondary age and above should have access to test kits through their education settings if they do not have any at home. LFD test kits are available for primary aged children through the usual routes:

1. Through Pharmacy collection: [Rapid lateral flow coronavirus \(COVID-19\) tests - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus/covid-19/rapid-lateral-flow-tests/)
2. Through community testing sites
3. Through the Gov.Uk home order channel: [Order coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-covid-19-rapid-lateral-flow-tests/)

For primary age children, LFD kits will **not** be supplied through their school.

Are there enough LFD kits?

- Due to exceptionally high demand, ordering lateral flow tests on gov.uk for individual members of the public has been temporarily suspended for periods

to fulfil existing orders. These pauses are temporary and availability is refreshed daily.

- All staff in education and childcare settings and students of secondary age and above should continue to be supplied with tests via their setting. Many schools and colleges recently placed orders for additional self-test kits to support testing over the Christmas period and on return in January, and these orders are being delivered between 6th and 17th December. If a setting runs out of test kits, they can continue to order more through the online ordering platform ([Apply for coronavirus test kits - GOV.UK \(test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk\)](#)) which remains open for education settings, or call 119 to request an emergency replenishment if they are going to run out of stock imminently.
- Alternatively, staff and students can continue to access lateral flow test kits via community test sites and local pharmacies.
- Parents of primary age children who have been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case by UKSHA Test and trace should access test kits from community test sites and / or local pharmacies.

How and when will test kits be provided to settings for DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts?

- If any members of staff, secondary aged pupils, FE or university students in their setting have been identified as a contact, their setting should provide them with a box of 7 LFD self-tests if they do not have any.
- If additional self-test kits for DTCC are required alongside regular asymptomatic testing, settings should review their existing stocks levels first. If more test kits are required, they should place an order as soon as possible via the [online ordering platform](#). (Remember the standard delivery timescales for schools and Further Education – orders placed by 5pm on a Tuesday will be delivered in the following week. Higher Education providers can continue to order tests as needed.)
- If a setting requires test kits sooner than can be fulfilled via the standard ordering process, [as a last resort] they should contact 119 to request an emergency replenishment.
- Alternatively, if settings do not have sufficient self-test kits to distribute to any staff members or pupils/ students that have been identified as a close contact and asked to undertake daily testing, they should be advised to access test kits from their local pharmacy or via gov.uk
- For primary aged pupils (aged 5-11 years old) identified as a contact, parents should also be advised to access test kits from a local pharmacy or via gov.uk

Monitoring

Should schools/colleges monitor whether pupils/students are taking DTCC?

- All testing is voluntary although strongly encouraged. Schools and colleges are not responsible for monitoring which students have been identified as a contact and whether these pupils are undertaking DTCC. They should instead

continue to focus on strongly encouraging pupils and students to regularly test and report their results.

Should a school/college refuse entrance to a pupil/student who has not undertaken a LFD test during the 7-day period after being identified as a close contact of Covid-19?

- No. The DTCC policy aims to help keep children and young people in face-to-face education. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged.

Primary and early years

Schools do not currently test primary pupils. How does this change affect primary schools?

- There is no change to the process for primary schools to follow. Primary schools will need to continue ordering test kits for their staff, while pupils should access test kits via their local pharmacy, testing centre or via gov.uk

Why are primary aged children being advised to undertake daily contact testing?

- We know that many parents of primary aged students are testing their children, so this will not be an unfamiliar process [to them](#). The universal testing offer for LFD now only uses nasal swabs which are less invasive for younger children. DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts will ask children identified as close contacts to do an LFD test every day for 7 days and, if negative, they can continue to attend their education setting. If the test result is positive, they will need to isolate and seek a confirmatory PCR.

Are primary aged children now being advised to undertake regular twice-weekly testing?

- No, public health advice suggests there is no significant benefit to regularly testing young children and so the policy remains that only secondary age and above in education settings are encouraged to test at home twice-weekly.
- Primary aged children are being advised to daily test only if they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed positive Covid-19 case. This is because being identified as a close contact means a person is at higher risk of having Covid-19 and the additional testing will enable us to better identify infections at an earlier stage.

Why are children under the age of 5 not advised to undertake DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts?

- Children under 5 identified as close contacts are exempt from self-isolation and DTCC for Covid-19 Contacts.
- If they are symptomatic, they should remain at home. We do not recommend PCR testing on under 5s except where the close contact occurred within the household.

- From 16 August 2021, children aged under 5 who are identified as close contacts would only be advised to take a PCR test if the positive case is on their own household. Testing is voluntary, but parents and carers are strongly encouraged to participate as testing helps reduce the spread of Covid-19 in early years settings. The child can continue to attend nursery etc while waiting for the PCR result. They should isolate if the test is positive or if they develop symptoms.

If a child under 5 is a confirmed case, what should they do?

- Under 5s are not being advised to take part in DTCC. If a child under 5 is a contact of a confirmed case, they are not required to self-isolate and should not start daily testing. If they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 they should limit their contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19 and arrange to take a PCR test as soon as possible. They can continue to attend an education or childcare setting while waiting for the PCR result. If the test is positive, they should follow the guidance set out in [Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) (www.gov.uk)

SEND

What should settings do if SEND pupils and students struggle or are unable to self-swab daily for 7 days?

- Settings should work with pupils, students and their families to agree the most appropriate route for testing for each individual.
- Where children and young people with SEND who are contacts of a confirmed case are unable to tolerate the recommended daily swab testing, settings should put in place reasonable adjustments, including offering additional support where appropriate.
- Assisted swabbing does not need to be done by a clinician. Special schools and special post-16 institutions already have a range of staff to meet the health needs of children and young people. More information on this is set out in the [Rapid asymptomatic testing in specialist settings guidance](#) .
- If they remain unable to tolerate testing, then parents and their children may decide to discontinue swab testing. They will not be required to self-isolate.
- If anyone is symptomatic they should immediately isolate and follow the UKSHA [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(Covid-19\) infection](#) guidance.
- Testing is voluntary and no child or young person will be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person.