

Supporting communities

Variant of Concern first identified in India

Covid-19 and Variants of Concern

- Viruses, like Covid-19, evolve over time.
- Sometimes a virus can change in a way that allows it to spread more quickly and it becomes known as a Variant of Concern. We can all help to stop the spread by:
 - Getting vaccinated
 - Remembering to wash hands, wear a face covering, make space and meet in the fresh air
 - Get PCR tested in surge areas or get tested twice a week in areas not affected by variants of concern
- We all need to continue to play a part in stopping the spread of the virus so that we can return to a more normal way of life and continue to ease lockdown restrictions.

How we can stop Variants of Concern from spreading

- Working with councils, NHS Test and Trace is providing additional testing in areas where confirmed cases of the Variant of Concern first identified in India have been found.
- It's important that people continue to follow government regulations and adhere to local guidance if a Variant of Concern is identified in their local area.
- When a cluster of Variants of Concern are identified in a small area, the local council will begin 'surge testing' of everyone in that area whether they have symptoms or not. This is because 1 in 3 people who have the virus show no symptoms.
- The more people who get tested and self isolate if positive, the more we can stop the virus from spreading.

Variant of Concern first identified in India

- The Variant of Concern first identified in India has been found in small clusters around the UK and cases are not exclusive to the Indian community.
- This is a new variant and we know it spreads fast – even faster than the one first detected in Kent. However, as it is new, it is still being investigated.
- There is currently no evidence that it causes more severe illness, or that it makes vaccines less effective.
- It's important that everyone helps by getting tested if they are asked to do so, even if they're vaccinated there's a chance that people can still spread the virus.

Surge Testing - What are individuals being asked to do?

Where a Variant of Concern is identified in an area, the Government will work with the local Council to address the outbreak. This is called “surge testing”.

Approach:

- People living / working / learning in the area will be encouraged to take a PCR test, whether they are showing symptoms of Covid or not.
- People with symptoms should book a free test online or by phone
- Your local Council will tell you how to get a PCR test if you don't have symptoms: this could be from a local test site or someone could come to your door

The key actions are:

- Get your PCR test
- Register your test to get your result
- Return your PCR test to a drop-off collection point and not by post
- Self-isolate if you test positive

Surge Testing information

- Additional testing is being made available to support new Variants of Concern.
- Currently the areas being supported are in North West England, London, and the West Midlands.
- The Government has produced posters, leaflets and social media posts to encourage people in these areas to take a Covid test
- You can co-brand these.



- Posters, leaflets and digital content including translations available to use <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/variant-surge-testing/resources/>

How to protect your community against Covid-19

- Community Leaders and Champions can help to keep their communities safe by making sure everyone knows about:
 - Continue to follow the national guidance: **Hands Face Space + Fresh Air**
 - **Get vaccinated** when you are offered it by the NHS or your GP
 - **In surge testing areas get a PCR test** regardless of whether you have symptoms or not
 - **Participate in regular (twice a week), rapid asymptomatic testing**
 - Book a PCR test if they develop symptoms

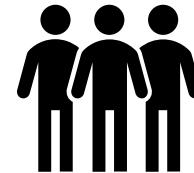
Testing and Self-Isolation

The importance of test, trace and self-isolation

Test, trace and self-isolation is an effective way of stopping COVID-19 from spreading and preventing new variants of the virus from emerging.

However, it only works if we do all 3:

1. Test regularly for infection.
2. Trace people who have been in close contact with someone who is infected.
3. Self-isolate for 10 days.



1 in 3 people have no symptoms so they can pass the virus on to other people without knowing it.

- Taking part in regular testing, and assisting in contacting others who may be infected, will help us all to live a more normal life.
- Testing also provides us with an early warning system if the virus is increasing again, locally or nationally.

GET TESTED

If you have symptoms of COVID-19

PCR testing

Get a PCR test as soon as possible if you have any of these symptoms:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- You and anyone you live with should stay at home until you get your test result. Only leave your home to have a test.

You can order a PCR test from here:

[Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-free-PCR-test-coronavirus)

If you do not have symptoms

Regular testing

- Anyone can now get regular rapid lateral flow tests without having symptoms.
- About 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have symptoms but can still infect others.
- You should do a rapid test twice a week (every 3 to 4 days) to check if you have the virus.
- If people test positive and self-isolate, it helps stop the virus spreading.

You can pick up free rapid lateral flow tests at pharmacies or order them here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/>

PCR testing in surge areas

- Getting PCR tested, regardless of whether you have symptoms or not in, surge areas

What is self isolation and contact tracing?

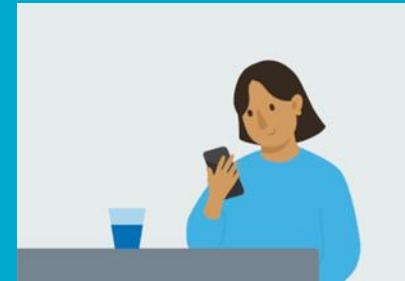
- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test result should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. This is because you could pass the infection on to others, even if you don't have symptoms.
- You may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the [NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#) if you are required to stay at home and self-isolate or you are the parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate.
- This guidance still applies even if you have received one or more doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- It may be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others in their household but please follow this guidance the best you can.
- Contact tracers will get in touch with you to identify people you have been in close contact with recently who may also be infected with the virus. Please be honest and open with them. They are there to help, not judge.

Trace: NHS COVID-19 App

- **It is more important than ever before that everyone downloads and uses the NHS COVID-19 app.**
- The app is the fastest and most convenient way to find out if you have been near other app users who test positive.
- The NHS COVID-19 app is available for download from the App Store and Google Play Store. For help with downloading please visit:
- [Get help downloading the app – NHS COVID-19 app support - NHS.UK](#)
- [The NHS COVID-19 app support website - NHS.UK](#)



Remember:



	Bluetooth	
	Contact Tracing	
	Check in to venues/ leave contact details	
	Update to the latest version	
	Protection for yourself and loved ones	

Content translations

Find Covid-19 Content <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/>

Shareable content can be found in the [Campaign Resource Centre](#) with many items translated into multiple languages. Here are just a few examples:

[Guide to lateral flow tests](#)



[Workplace Testing](#)



[Vaccine Disinformation](#)

[Regular Testing](#)



