

Key messages Covid self-isolation change 16 August 2021

From 16th August 2021, individuals are exempt from the legal duty to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 by NHS Test and Trace, and they meet one of four exemption criteria:

- (i) Those who are fully vaccinated (14 days after their final dose)
- (ii) Children and young people: those under the age of 18 years and 6 months
- (iii) Clinical trial participants: those who have taken part in – or are currently taking part in – an MHRA approved Covid-19 vaccine clinical trial
- (iv) Medical exemptions: those who can evidence that they cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons

Individuals who were self-isolating on 16th August, and who were fully vaccinated at the point of their contact with the positive case, are also free from the legal duty to self-isolate from 16th August.

Individuals who are exempt from self-isolation will be advised (but not required) to:

- a) limit contact with the clinically extremely vulnerable,
- b) take part in regular asymptomatic testing,
- c) wear a face covering in enclosed spaces and
- d) practice social distancing for the period of time they would have been required to self-isolate.

Positive cases will remain under a legal duty to self-isolate regardless of vaccination status or age. Vaccination reduces, but does not eliminate, the risk of acquiring and transmitting infection.

Anyone under the age of 18 who has been identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case will also no longer be required to self-isolate. Instead, they will be given advice about whether to get tested and depending on their age will need to self-isolate only if they have tested positive.

Children aged 4 and under who are identified as a contact will not be advised to take a PCR test unless the positive case was someone in their own household.

All individuals identified as contacts of a positive case will continue to be contact traced and the vaccination status of a contact will be verified by NHS Test and Trace. This process will initially be done by self-reporting vaccine status and will move to electronic verification of NHS records later in the month.

There is strong evidence that contacts of cases, including those who are vaccinated, have higher SARS-CoV-2 positivity rates than the general population.

It is essential that everyone observes the rules and undertakes a PCR test if they are identified as a contact, regardless of their vaccination status in order to protect those who are not yet fully vaccinated or are clinically vulnerable.

Symptoms of Covid-19 or Positive result on your PCR test?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, arrange to have a PCR test. You should stay at home while you are waiting for a home test kit, a test site appointment, or a test result.

Rapid lateral flow testing is available for free to anybody but is particularly important for those who are not fully vaccinated, those in education, and those in higher-risk settings such as the NHS, social care, and prisons

People with symptoms will continue to be advised to self-isolate and take a PCR test. Individuals who are exempt from self-isolation will be advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible unless they have received a positive PCR test result in the previous 90 days.

If your PCR test result is positive, you must self-isolate for 10 days to avoid spreading the infection to other people. This will continue to be a legal requirement. Those you live with – and any close contacts outside your household – will either be required to self-isolate or advised to get a PCR test, depending on their age and vaccination status.

Vaccinated and received a notification from the NHS app?

From 16 August those who are fully vaccinated or under 18 years of age and identified as a contact do not need to self-isolate; including if they have received a notification from the app. Instead, they are advised to get a PCR test. The app is being updated to reflect this and sign-post people to testing.

As we move away from legal restrictions to taking more personal responsibility, the app is perfectly placed to help users make informed decisions. We therefore encourage people to keep using the NHS COVID-19 app after they've received their vaccination.

Contact tracing / NHS Test and Trace (NHSTT)?

All positive cases, regardless of age or vaccination status, are contacted for three reasons:

- o To help ensure that they self-isolate and to check whether they need support to do this
- o To determine who they might have infected
- o To establish where and when they might have been infected, so that we can identify potential local outbreaks.

Tracing close contacts allows us to give them appropriate advice on testing and/or self-isolation, depending on their vaccination status and age.

Self-isolation grant

The £500 Test and Trace Support Payment is available for people on low incomes who must self-isolate due to COVID-19 [more information is available here](#). To be eligible, applicants must be employed or self-employed, unable to work from home and losing income as a result.

They need to have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, notified to self-isolate by the NHS COVID-19 app, or be a parent or guardian of a child who has been told to self-isolate.