

COVID-19 PCR swab testing for travel, occupational health and visa requirements

Liverpool School of
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What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is caused by a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that originated from an unknown animal source, in China during December 2019. The main symptoms of coronavirus are: a new continuous cough, or a high temperature, or a loss of or change in your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia).

Most cases report a mild illness, but some individuals will develop pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Those with underlying health problems, the elderly and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups are at increased risk of infection and death from COVID-19. The reason for this is not yet clear.

There is no prevention or treatment at present and **anyone who develops symptoms is advised to stay at home and self-isolate and contact NHS 111 to arrange an NHS test.**

Who can arrange for a test?

WTC offers PCR throat and nasal swab screening for travel or occupational purposes and for visa requirements for individuals who are physically well and do **not** have any symptoms of COVID-19 (asymptomatic). **We will only test asymptomatic individuals.**

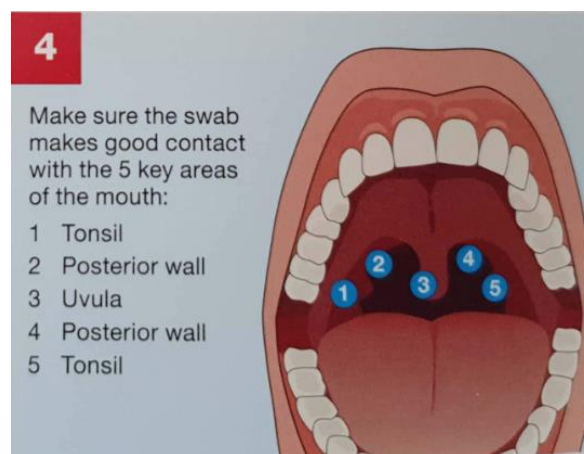
We routinely carry out infrared non-contact temperature checks to everyone on arrival at our clinics. If the temperature reading is above 37.8 degrees centigrade, we will unfortunately not be able to complete the test.

It must be understood that a negative test result is only valid on the day that you are tested, as you could potentially get infected immediately after having the test.

How is the test performed?

- Our clinical staff will wear an apron, a face mask and goggles/glasses and a plastic visor.
- The person carrying out the swab will explain the procedure and will show you the diagram (above right).

- They will then wash their hands and put gloves on before taking the swab from the packet.
- Opening your **mouth** wide will help the swabber make good contact with the 5 key areas of the throat which takes about 5 seconds.
- Then they will place the same swab gently into each **nostril** about 2 to 3 cm inside then rotate the swab 5 times and leave in for a further 5 to 10 seconds to absorb the material.
- This will help ensure that a sufficient sample is taken.
- If insufficient sample material is taken, the laboratory may not be able to perform the test and this may lead to an inconclusive result which means that it would need to be repeated.



(Image credit: TDL, 2020)

The procedure may make you gag briefly and might tickle your nose and make your eyes water. Tissues will be available.

Once collected, the swab is placed into the labelled swab-sample container, being careful not to spill any contents or touch any surfaces with the tip of the swab to prevent any cross contamination. Swabs are then sent on the same day to an external laboratory who carry out the PCR assay.

How will I get my results?

Swab results are usually available within 48 hours. Our reception team will ensure the result is sent to you via the contact details you have provided, so if you have asked for the results to be emailed or posted, please ensure we have the correct email/address for you, and it is written clearly on your registration form.

If you have already received an appointment reminder from us, this is a good indication we have the correct email address. Sometimes emails can go to your 'spam' box, so it is worth checking in there.

What do my results mean?

An **Inconclusive result** means your sample could not be read or it is not possible to say if you had coronavirus when the test was done.

A **Negative result** means that on the day you were tested, the laboratory did not detect any COVID-19 infection from the swab; and you should therefore be able to travel to your destination.

However, remember you could have been infected since that date, so you still need to follow NHS guidelines and practice social distancing. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing/what-you-need-to-do/>

A **Positive result** means you have COVID-19 virus and you and anyone you live with, should **stay at home** and self-isolate for 10 days and follow NHS advice. You should **not** travel. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>

The self-isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day you had the test, if you do not have symptoms) and the next 10 full days.

You could be fined if you do not self-isolate after getting a positive result.

Tell your employer, school or nursery about your result.

The testing laboratory that we use (TDL), will share your data with Public Health England and you will be contacted by TEST & TRACE and asked about your close contacts.

If you get any symptoms you should use the online NHS 111 coronavirus service: <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

If your symptoms get worse and you **feel very unwell** and think there is something seriously wrong, then **call 999 and ask for an ambulance.**