

Testing site FAQs

Are COVID-19 testing sites run by Sunderland City Council?

No. Testing sites are run by the Government's Department of Health and Social Care as part of the drive to make it easier for people in local communities to get tested if they have COVID-19 symptoms.

What are local testing sites?

These local testing sites are semi-permanent and are purpose-built in locations where members of the public who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 can be tested for the virus. They are walkthrough sites which means they are accessible on foot, as opposed to drive-through. However, appointments are still required before attending. As well as local testing sites there are also Mobile Testing Units at other locations across the city which operate in a different way. These are not semi permanent but set up and taken down each day and open for a shorter period of time during the day.

When will they be open?

8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

Do I need an appointment to attend?

Yes. You must book before attending any test site. This will ensure that sites have enough capacity to meet demand and prevent them from becoming overcrowded.

When should I request a test?

If you have any of the symptoms below, you should start self-isolating for 10 days (household members must start isolating for 14 days) while waiting for the test result.

The symptoms are:

- A new and persistent cough
- Fever
- Sudden loss of sense of taste or smell

You should book or order a test straight away at nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119. There is currently a very high demand for tests, so if you can't get through to the booking system at first, or the time or location you're offered aren't convenient, try again in a few hours.

When you go out for your test, go straight to the test site and once you have had your test go straight home again.

Can I book a test through the Council?

No. The Department of Health and Social Care is responsible for the operation of testing sites and tests can only be booked at nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119.

Can I request a test even if I don't have symptoms?

No. It is essential that tests are reserved for those who are currently showing symptoms of COVID-19. Even if you have been instructed to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace system, you should only book a test if you yourself are showing symptoms of the virus.

The symptoms are:

- A new and persistent cough
- Fever
- Sudden loss of sense of taste or smell

Should I get a test if I have come into contact with a person who has suspected COVID-19?

No. You must only request a test if you have developed symptoms of COVID-19. If someone you have been in close contact with tests positive for COVID-19 you will be contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service, at which point you will be instructed to self-isolate for 14 days.

How do I get to the testing site?

If you are attending a site for a COVID-19 test, it is essential you do not use taxis or public transport to get there. Walking or cycling is recommended if you are unable to drive. Be sure to wash your hands before you leave the house and avoid touching surfaces unnecessarily on your way. You should also wear a face covering at all times.

When you go out for your test, go straight to the test site and once you have had your test go straight home again.

Do I need to bring anything with me to the test?

You will be asked to bring your booking confirmation and a form of ID. You should also wear a face covering at all times when attending the test site, only removing it at the moment you take your test.

What will happen when I arrive for my test?

You will be asked to sanitise your hands upon arrival and ensure you maintain a 2-metre distance from others. You may be asked to queue and there may be bag checks in place. When inside the testing tent, your confirmation message and ID will be checked, and you will be given a testing kit. A member of staff will then direct you to a testing booth where you will carry out your test.

Who will conduct the test and what does it entail?

You will conduct the test yourself, which will consist of 2 swabs – one from the nose and one from the back of your throat. Full instructions will be given, and staff will be there to offer support should you encounter any issues.

How long do the tests take?

Slots for testing are 20 minutes, although you may be required to queue before entering the site.

Do I need to do anything after my test?

You should return straight home after your test without stopping anywhere else. You should then register online using the link on your test registration card and the remaining barcode from your test kit.

When will I receive my result?

You should receive your result within 72 hours. There are 3 types of result you can get: • negative • positive • unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive

What should I do if my test is positive?

A positive result means you had coronavirus when the test was done.

If your test is positive, you must continue to self-isolate.

- If you had a test because you had symptoms, keep self-isolating for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started.
- If you had a test but have not had symptoms, self-isolate for 10 days from when you had the test.

Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must self-isolate for 14 days from the day when symptoms started (or from day of test if no symptoms) -

You will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace to give details of any close contacts.

What should I do if my test is negative?

A negative result means the test did not find coronavirus. You do not need to self-isolate if your test is negative, as long as:

- everyone you live with who has symptoms tests negative
- everyone in your support bubble who has symptoms tests negative
- you have not been told you must self-isolate for 14 days by NHS Test and Trace
- you feel well – if you feel unwell, stay at home until you're feeling better

Note: If you have diarrhoea or you're being sick, stay at home until 48 hours after they've stopped.

What should I do if my test result is unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive?

An unclear, void, borderline or inconclusive result means it's not possible to say if you had coronavirus when the test was done. You should:

- Get another test as soon as possible, as long as it's within 5 days of your symptoms developing
- If you can't get another test in time, continue to self-isolate for 10 days from your symptoms developing

What should I do if I haven't received my result within 72 hours?

When you book your appointment, you will receive a confirmation message that will include a contact number which you can phone if you do not receive your test result within 72 hours.

If my test is positive does that mean I'm now immune to COVID-19?

No. There is no evidence to suggest that a person develops immunity from COVID-19 after being infected.

Will this test tell me if I have had COVID-19 in the past?

No. This test can only tell you whether you are currently infected with COVID-19.

Are the testing sites safe?

Yes. Anyone attending an appointment at a walk-through testing site will be provided with guidance on getting to and from the test site safely, including: adhering to social distancing; not travelling in a taxi or on public transport; wearing a face covering throughout (including travelling to and from the testing centre); and washing their hands thoroughly before leaving for their appointment. The approach has been agreed with expert clinical oversight. The site will also be security monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Do the testing sites pose any risk to the surrounding areas?

No. Before trialling the sites, the Department of Health and Social Care consulted with clinical experts including public health professionals. This is a proportionate step given the benefits of increased access to testing, including for some of our most vulnerable citizens. Those attending local testing sites are provided with guidance about how to do so in a way that minimises the risk to themselves – including the need to avoid contact with others while on route and to wear a face covering.

Why have the local testing sites been set up?

Increased testing capacity is good news for communities in Sunderland. Having walkthrough sites in the city supports all the work we're doing to keep infection rates down and keep residents safe, as well as keeping schools and businesses open.

How long will the local testing sites be there?

They are temporary sites, which are part of a national testing network and are three of many all over the country, and will remain in place for as long as needed. We are working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to monitor their impact.

What about the loss in parking?

We appreciate some people may be inconvenienced by the temporary loss of parking spaces. We wrote to residents and businesses in the area to let them know and to explain that there is adequate alternative parking nearby. We will continue to monitor the impact, particularly in resident parking areas. In addition to monitoring, we will carry out enforcement where necessary.

We have to balance the needs of the community with the unprecedented situation we are in as infection rates continue to rise and, on balance, we feel the right thing to do at the current time is to help provide these additional testing facilities.

Will there be more rubbish on the streets because of this?

We are working with the DHSC to ensure the site remains clean and tidy. The site will also be security monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Will there be more noise and light pollution caused by the local testing sites?

The generators used on site will be turned off after the sites close at 8pm. There will also be no additional lighting in the sites. Therefore there will be no noise or light caused by the sites after this time.

Why was I not consulted about these sites?

The coronavirus crisis demands a quick response. Government has committed to make it easier for those with symptoms to get a test. In addition, local restrictions were recently introduced in Sunderland to prevent the spread of the virus. The council therefore worked quickly and decisively with DHSC to ensure increased testing capacity was secured for the city.