

Hospital Testing for COVID-19

Summary table providing an overview of COVID-19 hospital testing, covering [1\) patients](#) and [2\) staff](#).

When using this table the following applies;

- Reference to hospital '**admissions**' are those which require an overnight stay in hospital.
- Screening undertaken outwith national programmes which are detailed below should be based on decision of clinical services e.g screening in critical care settings.
- Any patient who has previously tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 by PCR should be exempt from being re-tested within a period of 90 days from their initial symptom onset, unless they develop new possible COVID-19 symptoms. This is because fragments of inactive virus can be persistently detected by PCR in respiratory tract samples for some time following infection. The exception to this is:
 - Patients being discharged to a care home – see [duration of precautions section](#) within the Winter Respiratory Infection IPC Guidance for detailed information.
- NB: A negative test does not mean that the patient is not incubating the virus. Staff should practice vigilance in monitoring for any symptom onset in the patient and reinforce the importance of COVID-19 measures including physical distancing, hand hygiene, wearing of facemasks and respiratory etiquette.
- If an inpatient has undergone a COVID-19 test in the previous 24 hours, there is no need to repeat it and the result can be accepted for any of the testing requirements below with the exception of
 - New symptom onset – a new PCR test must be performed as soon as new onset of COVID-19 symptoms are recognised or there is a clinical indication to do so.
 - Pre elective surgical screening – where the requirement for a negative test must be within a set time period (ideally within 48 hours)

Testing prior to an Aerosol Generating Procedure (AGP) - Airborne precautions are required for all patients undergoing an AGP on the respiratory pathway. Airborne precautions are also required for patients on the non-respiratory pathway unless there is evidence of a negative COVID-19 test in which case droplet precautions may be applied. This recognises the risk of asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic carriage of COVID-19 and the resulting risk of aerosolising the virus during the AGP and applies to all patients regardless of reason for admission. The negative test should ideally be within 48 hours prior to the AGP but must be no more than 72 hours before the AGP. It should be recognised that the closer to the AGP that the test is undertaken, the less risk there is of the patient having acquired COVID-19 and subsequent aerosolisation during the AGP.

1) Patient testing

Who is being tested	Type of test	Frequency	Relevant policy letter or guidance documents
Requirement 1 All elective surgical patients must be tested prior to admission	PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prior to admission ➤ Retest on day 5 of in-patient stay if admission test was negative ➤ Perform new test at any point in the inpatient stay if new onset of COVID-19 symptoms are recognised or there is a clinical indication to do so 	Appendix 19 of the NIPCM.
Requirement 2 All planned medical admissions <u>AND</u>	PCR or Point of Care Testing (PoCT) if available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prior to admission ➤ Retest on day 5 of in-patient stay if admission test was negative ➤ Perform new test at any point in the inpatient stay if new onset of COVID-19 symptoms are recognised or there is a clinical indication to do so 	NHS Scotland Chief Executive letter on the Testing Expansion Plan Coronavirus (COVID-19) point of care and rapid testing - clinical management: governance policy

Who is being tested	Type of test	Frequency	Relevant policy letter or guidance documents
<p>All emergency admissions incl maternity and mental health service</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Any other patient admitted to hospital not covered by in the above groups (inc hospital transfers)</p>			
<p>Requirement 3</p> <p>Transfer of a non-COVID-19 patient to <u>another ward</u></p>	PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If transfer is within 5 days of first admission to hospital, no additional testing is required and the patient must continue to be tested on day 5 of the admission as per requirements 1-4 ➤ If transfer is more than 5 days after first admission to hospital, a new test should be performed on arrival at the receiving ward (within 4 hours) UNLESS the transfer is to a clinically vulnerable area then pre transfer testing must be built into the transfer plan and a test undertaken pre transfer wherever possible. 	<p>NHS Scotland Chief Executive letter on the Testing Expansion Plan</p> <p>Further general guidance on patient transfers is included within the 'Transfer of service users with respiratory symptoms/confirmed respiratory pathogen' section of the Winter Respiratory Infections IPC Guidance.</p>
<p>Requirement 4</p> <p>Transfer of a non COVID-19 patient to <u>another hospital/NHS board</u></p>	PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ All transfers to another hospital or board should recommence testing frequency as per Requirement 2 ➤ Tested on admission to new hospital or NHS Board ➤ Retested on day 5 of in-patient stay if admission test was negative 	<p>Further general guidance on patient transfers is included within the 'Transfer of service users with respiratory symptoms/confirmed respiratory pathogens' section of the Winter Respiratory Infections IPC Guidance.</p>

Who is being tested	Type of test	Frequency	Relevant policy letter or guidance documents
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If the transfer is to a clinically vulnerable area then pre transfer testing must be built into the transfer plan and a test undertaken pre transfer wherever possible. However, the transfer need not be delayed whilst a result is awaited and patient should be isolated on transfer to the receiving area until a negative result is achieved. 	
<p>Requirement 5</p> <p>Duration of IPC precautions and discharge of COVID-19 patients</p>	PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Testing is not routinely required for stepdown of IPC precautions or discharge of COVID-19 except in the following cases; ➤ Testing is required prior to discharge from a hospital to care home and may be considered prior to discharge if someone in the household is immunocompromised or for severely immunocompromised individuals. See Duration of precautions sections of the Winter Respiratory Infection IPC guidance for full information. 	<p>Further information can be found in the Duration of Precautions section within the Winter Respiratory Infections IPC guidance</p> <p>COVID-19: Information and Guidance for Care Home Settings (Adults and Older People).</p>
<p>Serial testing</p>	PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Serial testing of any patient group to reduce nosocomial transmission must be determined locally based on local intelligence (inc prevalence and incidence of nosocomial transmission) and risk assessments. ➤ Serial testing does not replace the testing requirements above. 	<p>NHS Scotland Chief Executive letter on the Testing Expansion Plan</p>

Who is being tested	Type of test	Frequency	Relevant policy letter or guidance documents
Testing contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases	PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Individuals identified as contacts should be tested if appropriate and at a frequency determined by the IPCT/IMT. 	
Tested as part of a hospital outbreak	PCR Or where agreed appropriate by IMT, POCT/LFD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proactive case finding should be supported during an outbreak through selected testing of any suspected symptomatic cases and, when indicated, asymptomatic testing as determined by the Incident Management Team (IMT). ➤ The highest level of benefit in terms of reducing transmission will be from identifying those most likely to have been infected, including asymptomatic positive cases who may transmit the infection. 	NIPCM – Chapter 3
Any patient who develop symptoms should be tested immediately, and testing should be considered where there is clinical suspicion of COVID-19.	PCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Any patient who develops symptoms should be tested immediately. 	

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2) Staff testing

Staff testing requirements are detailed on the Scottish Government website and can be found at the following links;

- Asymptomatic staff testing <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-healthcare-worker-testing/>
- Self-Isolation Policy for health and social care staff <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-test-and-protect/pages/care-home-social-care-workers/>

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