

Manchester Test and Trace

9 March 2021

Which test is best?

Manchester's public health chief David Regan gives the lowdown on Covid testing in the city- for people with and without symptoms.

Introduction

Testing for Covid-19 is a priority for the city and is also one of the important ways that we can come out of lockdown safely. The easiest way for me to describe it is by breaking it down into testing for people who have Covid symptoms – and then the preventative work we are doing testing people who do not have symptoms. This second part is because we know that sometimes it can be possible for people to have the virus and pass it on without knowing they have it.

If you have symptoms:

You need to book a test as soon as possible by ringing 119 or logging on to [gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test).

There are a lot of local sites across Manchester and you will be able to choose one that is closest to you. This test is called a PCR test (polymerase chain reaction – and it's a swab to the back of the throat and nose and results are sent to a lab for analysis. Results normally come back within 24-48 hours.

Don't forget that even if you have been vaccinated must still go for a test if you have symptoms (especially if is in the early days of your vaccination and you have not yet built up immunity).

The main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19 are a high temperature, a new continuous cough, and a change to your sense of smell or taste that's different to normal. These are the main symptoms but other signs can also include tiredness, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Why is PCR testing a good thing? Because its accuracy is very high and the results are very reliable. It keeps you and others safe.

If you don't have symptoms

We have a number of schemes that we are operating now designed to test people who may have more possible exposure to the virus. These include people who cannot work from home and parents or households associated with schools staff or children going back to school. And sometimes we can also do a form of testing for large groups of people in certain areas or places if we think that there may be a new strain or variant of the virus.

This is called asymptomatic testing and I have divided it into three main sections below.

- **Rapid testing for anyone who lives or works in Manchester and can't do their job from home**

If you live or work in Manchester and are not able to work from home, you can have rapid testing (lateral flow testing) twice a week.

This form of testing is also through a swab test and results are normally within half an hour (and sent to you within the hour) because they do not need to be sent to a lab for analysis.

The tests are for people, who do not have symptoms, and whose own organisation or employer does not offer a testing scheme. Our scheme is also open to charities and the voluntary sector, smaller businesses, freelancers and sole traders in the city and will help to stop the spread of the virus while also helping with business continuity.

In general, businesses – especially the larger ones - have been asked where possible to sign up to a [Government scheme](#) to do their own testing. However, we have decided to offer our testing sites to smaller employers where it may not be possible for them to carry out testing on their own premises.

You can book a slot at our test sites across the city by ringing 0161 947 0770/ 0800 0924020. The line is open from 8am to 6pm Monday- Friday. Test slots are available Monday-Saturday and can be arranged to fit work and shift patterns.

Remember, that even if your test is negative, you must still follow all social distance and other safety measures. And, you still need to be tested even if you have had your Covid vaccination.

Why is this form of testing a good thing at an asymptomatic site? Because it can pick up positive cases when people don't know they have the virus – and this then stops them from passing it on without knowing it. Worth remembering, too, that the tests can only identify a positive case when the viral load is high enough – in other words the incubation stages of the virus may not register. This is why rapid testing is not used for people who definitely have symptoms of the virus.

If you have a lateral flow test carried out at one of our sites and you get a positive result, you do not need to have a confirmation PCR test.

(Please note that NHS staff and social care staff in the city are also part of work schemes which are not included here).

- **Rapid COVID testing offered to households of children returning to school or school staff**

Rapid testing is now available for the households, or childcare and support bubbles of primary and secondary pupils and school staff. The tests are for people **who do not have any Covid symptoms** - and are an extra precaution.

The rapid tests (called lateral flow devices as above) involve swabs to the back of the nose and throat and can give a result within half an hour (and sent to you within the hour) because they do not need to be sent off to a lab for analysis.

Tests can be carried out at home and kits can be collected from our local testing sites. If this isn't possible, home test kits can be ordered online.

The local testing sites are open now **and will be open in afternoons from 1.30pm - 7pm daily** to collect kits.

The current sites are:

- Armitage / Moseley Road - Lower Carpark, Fallowfield
- Ancoats Central Retail Park, Ancoats & Beswick
- Belle Vue Speedway, Longsight
- Brownley Road, Woodhouse Park
- Birchall Way (Former Landrover garage), Hulme
- Denmark Road Building, Rusholme
- Platt Fields Park, Fallowfield
- Ukrainian Cultural Centre, Cheetham

Full details can be found at [Rapid lateral flow testing for households and bubbles of school pupils and staff - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff)

Why is this form of testing good? It offers extra reassurance to parents, carers and households linked to school staff or pupils returning to school. Worth noting that parents/carers can also book to have a test at our asymptomatic test sites mentioned above. Also parents need to know that if they test positive using a kit at home they will need to go for a confirmatory PCR test (for people who have Covid symptoms). PCR tests are easy to book and there are sites across the city.

(Please note that secondary schools will have contacted parents or carers directly about testing of pupils once they are back in school).

- **Enhanced Community Testing (or surge testing)**

This is mass testing of groups of people in certain places or areas, looking to check for a new variant or strain of Coronavirus. This is also aimed at people who do not have any symptoms, but this time the test is a PCR test because it not only checks for Coronavirus, but it can also be sent to a lab for specific genome sequencing to identify any new strains.

Manchester does not have any current enhanced community testing, but, it has previously in parts of city where people involved all received letters and other forms of communication directing them to where they needed to go for the test. We can react very quickly in these instances and even bring in mobile testing sites.

Why is this form of testing a good thing? Because it helps us monitor any new strains and identify any new patterns in virus behaviour. For the person concerned a positive result means exactly the same as usual with the same rules around self-isolation.

And finally...thank you for your time in reading this piece. Testing is not only vital but it needs to be seen as part of our approach to staying safe in the long-term – along with all the other safety measures including washing hands, social distancing and face coverings and having the vaccine when invited. Thank you to everyone in Manchester for helping us with this.

David Regan, Director of Public Health for Manchester