

Chief Medical Officer for Scotland
Professor Sir Gregor Smith

Interim Chief Nursing Officer for Scotland
Anne Armstrong



Dear Colleague

Advance notice of changes to the Scottish Government's COVID-19 testing guidance

We are writing to inform you of changes to Scottish Government's COVID-19 testing guidance. This guidance affects health and social care settings.

Following a clinical review, the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care, the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, and the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health have agreed to end routine asymptomatic COVID-19 testing before discharge from Scottish hospitals to care homes and hospices.

Given the continued success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, reduced severity of illness and hospitalisations, as well as availability of treatments for COVID-19, we are in a different stage of the pandemic and our testing guidance should reflect this. Advice to support this decision was sought from Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (ARHAI) Scotland, Public Health Scotland, and Scottish Government Professional Clinical Advisors in Infection Prevention and Control. This approach is also in line with those being taken across the rest of the UK.

Testing protocol for COVID-19 will revert to testing as appropriate to support clinical diagnosis and care, and for outbreak management as per the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual, or on advice from local Infection Prevention and Control Teams or local Health Protection Teams. Testing for those who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments will also continue to be available.

The proposed changes have been shared with representatives of hospice and care home providers as well as with Care Home Relatives Scotland. We would like to reiterate assurance that, as noted above, testing will continue for individuals where there is a clinical need, and results managed as per current guidelines. We recognise that concern may arise as a result of this change but Scottish Government officials will continue to liaise with partners as these changes are rolled out, to ensure any concerns are addressed.

From the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland and Interim Chief Nursing Officer
Professor Sir Gregor Smith
Anne Armstrong

21 May 2024

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Addresses

NHS Scotland Chairs
NHS Scotland Chief Executives
Chief Officers Health and Social Care Partnerships
Chief Social Work Officers
Local Authorities
HR Directors
Medical Directors
Nurse Directors
Primary Care Leads
Directors of Pharmacy
Directors of Public Health
Directors of Dentistry
Health Protection Teams
Optometric Advisors
Infection Control Managers
Infection Control Doctors
Infection Control Nurses
NHS Occupational Health Leads
Scottish Microbiology and Virology Network
Adult Social Care Provider Representatives
Care Inspectorate

Further Enquiries to:

Scottish Government
Directorate for Chief Medical Officer
Email: cmo@gov.scot

Timing of the change

We committed to provide a lead in time for implementation of any new testing policy change. Therefore these changes should take effect no later than 3 June 2024.

Further information

The [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual](#) and associated COVID-19 resources, including the A-Z of pathogens section for SARS Co-V-2, will be reviewed and the section related to testing prior to discharge from hospital will be archived.

Full social care guidance (available here [COVID-19 - information and guidance for social, community, and residential care settings](#)) and health protection teams guidance (available here [COVID-19 - guidance for health protection teams \(HPTs\)](#)) will also be updated.

Yours sincerely

Gregor Smith

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