

Community-based COVID treatments Q&A for patient enquiries

Changes to the COVID treatments service in June 2023

1. Why is the service changing?

The COVID-19 treatment services that ran from December 2021 to June 2023 were set up under interim arrangements as a response to the pandemic, using a common care pathway that applied nationally. These services were supported by funding from the Department of Health and Social Care.

Now that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has given its [final recommendations](#) on some of the COVID-19 treatments that should be offered by the NHS, these treatments are funded and arranged as part of routine NHS services.

Local NHS organisations, called Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), can now set up local COVID-19 treatments services in a way that works for their areas. This is in line with other routinely provided services and should enable the planning of COVID treatments services that are suited to local populations.

2. Why won't the NHS be contacting me after I report a positive test? Why do I have to call a GP/111/hospital specialist?

Between December 2021 and June 2023, a national digital system was in place that helped identify most highest risk patients who had reported a positive COVID test. This enabled automatic referrals to COVID Medicine Delivery Units (CMDUs) who would then contact patients to arrange an assessment for treatments.

This system was set up under interim arrangements as a response to the pandemic and additional funding from the Department of Health and Social Care has since ended, with the system closing on 27 June 2023.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has given its [final recommendations](#) on some of the COVID-19 treatments that should be offered by the NHS. Providing access to these treatments is the responsibility of local NHS organisations, called Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), who will be looking at alternative ways to support eligible patients and provide treatments if required.

Patients were sent a letter/email in June 2023 to update them about this change. This informed them that they will no longer be proactively contacted, and will instead need to contact their local NHS services if they test positive, which could include their GP practice, NHS 111 or hospital specialist.

In Mid and South Essex where patients who have received the letter from NHS England test positive, they should contact our Covid Medicines Delivery Unit via;

01245 515919 (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm, Sat/Sun/BH's 9am-1pm)

Voicemail available outside working hours

Who these treatments are for

3. What health conditions make you eligible for COVID treatments?

A summary of the eligible health conditions is provided at www.nhs.uk/CoronavirusTreatments, with more detail provided in the Government's updated [Independent Advisory Group report](#).

If you have one of these health conditions, or be receiving other eligible medicines, you may have received a letter or email from the NHS. This letter does not guarantee treatment as doctors will need to assess you to make sure the treatment is right for you.

If you think you may be eligible for COVID treatments, but haven't received a letter, you can contact your specialist clinician or GP to discuss whether you are in one of the highest risk groups.

4. It doesn't look like I am in the highest risk patient group. Is there another way I can access coronavirus treatments?

If you are **not** in the highest risk group, you may be eligible to join the PANORAMIC study. The PANORAMIC study is open to individuals living anywhere in the UK who meet the following criteria:

- Have received a positive test for COVID-19.
- Feel unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 that started in the last five days.
- Are aged 50+, or 18-49 years old with an underlying medical condition that can increase the risk of developing severe COVID-19.

Participants in the study will be randomly selected to either be in a group who receives a course of oral antiviral treatment, or a group that doesn't. Two different groups are needed so the study team can see any difference in the health of those who received the antiviral treatment compared to those who didn't. All participants will still be able to access any other NHS care that they would normally expect to receive.

Further information on eligibility for the national study can be found on the PANORAMIC website: www.panoramictrial.org.

5. I was previously classed as clinically extremely vulnerable – why am I not eligible for treatments?

The list of health conditions that make someone potentially eligible for COVID-19 treatments has been agreed by the UK Chief Medical Officers.

It's based on [advice from an independent advisory group of health experts](#) commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

This list is different to the list of health conditions that previously identified people as 'clinically extremely vulnerable' or those that were advised to shield. It is also different to the list of health conditions that make someone eligible for COVID-19 vaccines.

Going forward, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) will be managing and publishing any changes to eligibility for COVID treatments.

Patient communications

6. Why have I received a letter or email about COVID treatments?

Health experts have looked at the health conditions which put people at the highest risk from coronavirus.

Some patients in this highest risk group were informed by a letter or email that they may be eligible to receive these treatments, should they test positive for COVID.

If you have received a letter from NHS England about COVID treatments, it means your medical records show that you have, or previously had, one or more of those health conditions, which means that these new treatments might be suitable for you if a test confirms you have COVID.

The letter/email that was issued to patients in June 2023 outlined some changes to the way people will access COVID treatments from 27 June 2023.

You can find out how the NHS has used your information to identify and contact you about this treatment at www.digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/treatments/transparency-notice.

7. How can I access this information in another language or alternative format?

Easy read and other language versions of the letter that went out to patients are available at <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/treatments>.

Braille can also be posted to potentially eligible patients on request.

8. What should I do if I think I might be eligible for treatment but have not received a letter or email from the NHS about these treatments?

You do not need a letter or email in order to access these treatments.

If you think you may be eligible for COVID treatments, but haven't received a letter, you can contact your specialist clinician or GP to discuss whether you are in one of the highest risk groups.

If a specialist clinician or GP advises that you have one of the health conditions which makes you potentially eligible, then you should follow the advice on the [website](#) to order lateral flow tests to keep at home.

If you ever test positive for COVID-19 you should contact our Covid Medicines Delivery Unit via;

01245 515919 (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm, Sat/Sun/BH's 9am-1pm)

Voicemail available outside working hours

9. How have you contacted patients to let them know about these treatments?

The NHS has been able to identify most patients from national datasets and these patients should by now have received a letter or email which is also available in large print, easy read format and multiple languages. Patients can also request a braille version.

These letters are about raising awareness of potential treatments but are not required for eligible patients to be able to access treatments. Receiving a letter also does not guarantee treatment.

If you think you are eligible for treatments, but haven't received a letter, you can contact your GP or specialist to discuss whether you are eligible.

Test kits

10. What should I do if I think I might be eligible for treatment but have not been sent any lateral flows tests?

From 27 June 2023, patients will no longer be automatically sent lateral flow tests. However, eligible patients can still order them free of charge.

If you think you may have one of the health conditions which means you might be eligible for COVID-19 treatments and you do not have any lateral flow tests, then you should follow the advice on the NHS.uk [website](#) to order lateral flow tests to keep at home.

11. Do I need to report my test result? I was previously told I have to, but have now heard that I don't need to.

Up until 27 June, you should [report your COVID-19 rapid lateral flow test result on GOV.UK](#) or by calling 119, using your NHS number and postcode. This is so the NHS can contact you about treatment if your result is positive. If you have not been contacted within 24 hours of your positive test and think that you may be eligible for COVID-19 treatments, call your GP surgery, specialist or 111.

From 27 June, you will no longer have to report your COVID test result in order to access an assessment for treatment.

However, we would still encourage you report your test result where possible at <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result> or by calling 119. This will ensure your test result is visible to the NHS, which may support referral and assessment.

12. Can I use tests bought from a shop? I was previously told I couldn't, but have now heard that I can.

Up until 27 June, we recommend that you use free tests ordered from [GOV.UK](#) or 119 so that you can report the result, and the NHS can contact you about treatment.

You can use tests purchased from a pharmacy or shop, but you won't be able to report the result from the test. If you get a positive result from a test you've paid for, you need to contact your GP, NHS 111 or specialist to arrange a referral for an assessment for treatment.

From 27 June, you will need to contact your GP, NHS 111 or specialist after a positive test, regardless of whether it is a test you have bought from a shop or a free test from GOV.UK/119.

13. I've heard that arrangements for receiving tests will be changing from 1 October 2023. What are these arrangements? Will tests still be free?

From 1 October 2023, the way you access tests may change. We are unable to provide details on what these arrangements will be at this moment in time. You should check www.nhs.uk/CovidTreatments for more information closer to the time.

Getting treated

14. What are these treatments?

There are currently two types of treatments available for patients - neutralising monoclonal antibodies (nMAbs) and antivirals. The NHS will advise which treatment, if any, is suitable for you.

If you are given an antiviral treatment, they normally come as capsules that you swallow, and they can be taken at home. A pharmacy will usually arrange for the medicine to be delivered to you or it can be collected by someone else such as a friend or relative.

If a neutralising monoclonal antibody treatment is right for you, it will usually be given to you through a drip in your arm (infusion). You'll usually get it at a local health centre. Treatment takes approximately 30 minutes with time afterwards to check you feel OK.

Your local NHS provider will give you instructions on where the treatment will be given to you, and how to get there and back home safely. The NHS may be able to arrange for your transport if you are unable to make your own COVID-safe travel arrangements.

15. What should I do if I think I'm eligible for treatments and have tested positive for COVID, but I have not been contacted by the NHS?

Up until 27 June, you should [report your COVID-19 rapid lateral flow test result on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/report-your-covid-19-rapid-lateral-flow-test-result) or by calling 119, using your NHS number and postcode. This is so the NHS can contact you about treatment if your result is positive. If you have not been contacted within 24 hours of your positive test and think that you may be eligible for COVID-19 treatments, call your GP surgery, specialist or 111.

The way patients access COVID treatments is changing from Tuesday 27 June 2023.

If you get COVID from Tuesday 27 June 2023 and you have one of the health conditions which might make you eligible:

- You will no longer be automatically contacted by the NHS about treatments after reporting a positive COVID test result.
- You should instead contact our Covid Medicines Delivery Unit via;

01245 515919 (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm, Sat/Sun/BH's 9am-1pm)

Voicemail available outside working hours

16. How do I access treatments if I am away from home e.g. on holiday?

If you're away from home and need to access an assessment for COVID treatments, you can contact any GP surgery nearby.

[Find a GP surgery near you](#)

You can receive emergency treatment from a GP surgery for up to 14 days – for example, if you fall ill while on holiday.

You can also phone [NHS 111](#).

Further information: [How can I see a GP if I'm away from home? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

17. I received a letter/email/SMS saying that I might be suitable treatments, but following my positive test, a doctor said I wasn't eligible

Not all patients who are identified using NHS databases will be suitable for treatment.

The decision to offer treatment is made by an NHS clinician who will need to assess whether or not treatment would be beneficial to that patient.

If this happened to you and you were not offered treatment, it may be due to any of the following:

- Your symptoms were already improving by the time you were assessed for suitability for treatment
- Your medical record may be out of date. For example, you currently no longer have the condition that previously made you eligible for treatment.
- Your medical record may contain incorrect clinical codes that do not accurately reflect your health status.
- The digital identification process was designed to identify as many patients as possible who may be eligible for treatment. Sometimes this means capturing individuals that meet some, but not all of the eligible criteria for COVID-19 treatments.

If you have COVID, some antiviral medicines are also available through a national study, led by the University of Oxford. The study is open to people in the UK who are aged 50 and over, or are aged 18 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. If you are interested in taking part, please visit the [Panoramic trial website](#)