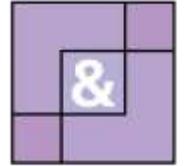




Cheshire & Merseyside
Health & Care Partnership

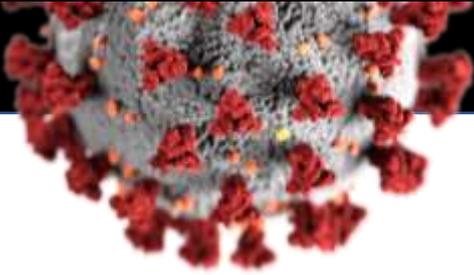


Coronavirus (COVID-19): Cheshire and Merseyside Antibody testing programme



"Be the reason someone gets better care today"

Cheshire and Merseyside COVID-19 Antibody Testing



As part of the national response to COVID-19, antibody testing is available in Cheshire and Merseyside for NHS staff and some patients.

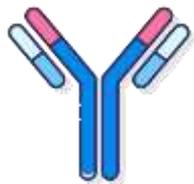
Laboratory-based tests will be used in the first phase of our antibody testing programme to tell us whether that person has already had the virus. To avoid putting additional pressure on phlebotomy services, we will begin the roll out of antibody testing in NHS settings where blood is already being taken. Patients who are already having blood taken as part of other tests will be asked whether they would like an antibody test, NHS staff will also be offered a test, employers will notify staff of where and when testing is available, and how to access the service.

There is **no strong evidence** yet to suggest that those who have had the virus develop long-lasting immunity which would prevent them from getting the virus again. Antibody testing at this stage is useful primarily to improve our understanding about the spread of the virus.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is an antibody test?

COVID-19 antibody testing (also known as SARS CoV-2 antibody test) is a blood test to look at whether the body has produced an immune reaction (antibodies) to the COVID-19 virus.



Antibodies develop in viral infections as part of the body's attempt to fight the virus. An antibody test can tell someone whether they have had the virus, which causes COVID-19, in the past. The test works by taking a blood sample and testing for the presence of antibodies to the COVID-19 virus.

What are the different types of tests used in the NHS?

There are two types of test available for COVID-19; the PCR/viral test, and the antibody test.

PCR test/virus test:

PCR test aims to find out if you currently have the virus by taking a swab from the nose and throat. It does not confirm if an individual has had the virus. A positive result does not necessarily indicate that you will go on to develop antibodies to the virus and an immune response. It is possible that around 10% of people who test positive will not develop an immune response.

Antibody test:

In contrast, antibody tests are blood tests which detect antibodies to the virus as a marker of past infection. A positive test result indicates that a person has previously had the virus at some point.

Can members of the public book an antibody test?

Patients who are already having blood taken as part of other tests (either in hospital or in their GP practice) may be asked whether they would like an antibody test by their Doctor or Clinician.

What do antibody test results mean?

A positive antibody test demonstrates that someone has developed antibodies to the virus. The presence of antibodies signals that the body has staged an immune response to the virus. This usually happens about two weeks after the first symptoms, but may take up to 6 weeks following infection.

A negative test result does not completely rule out the possibility of previous infection with Covid-19 (SARS CoV-2). Samples from very early on in infection can produce negative results, so this test cannot be used to diagnose an acute (current) infection.

Also, over time following infection, antibody levels may decline and eventually become negative. People who are immunocompromised (have problems with their immune system) may make an antibody response to Covid-19 infection very slowly or may not produce enough antibody for the test to become positive.

COVID-19 is a new disease, and our understanding of the body's immune response to it is limited. We do not know, for example, how long an antibody response lasts, nor whether having antibodies means you can't transmit the virus to others. Our understanding of the virus will grow with new scientific studies as evidence emerges.

An antibody test result can only tell an individual whether or not they have had the virus in the past. Antibody tests are also being used currently in surveillance studies, to understand what proportion of the population has already had the virus.



Can this antibody test tell me if I have an infection now or had a recent infection?

The test for antibodies is only reliable for detecting that you had the infection more than two weeks ago.

Can this antibody test tell me if I have an infection now or had a recent infection?

The test for antibodies is only reliable for detecting that you had the infection more than two weeks ago.

If you test positive for antibodies, can you ignore lockdown restrictions?

No. There is no evidence yet to suggest that those who have been proven to have had the virus are immune. This is the position of the World Health Organisation.

As the presence of antibodies doesn't necessarily mean you are immune, you should continue to comply with social distancing measures and government guidelines. All infection prevention and control measures must continue to be in place irrespective of the presence of antibodies.

What does a negative antibody test mean?



For most people a negative test will mean that they have not had the infection, if the test was done more than two weeks after the start of symptoms. However, not all infected individuals make enough antibodies to be detected by the current tests. So, for a small number of people, a negative result may not mean they have not had the infection.

How will I be informed of the result?

The method by which you receive your result will vary depending on the test provider. You should ask this when the blood sample is taken.

Getting your result could be via SMS - if you have been offered this type of test results service and specified it on your blood test form.

Where SMS has not been offered, you will be informed via your employing organisation or for patients, the person who organised your test.

How will my information be used?



The results gathered across the testing programme will provide information on the prevalence of COVID-19 in different regions of the country and help us better understand how the disease spreads.

Are there any risks to having the test?

There are some risks related to having a blood test, such as feeling dizzy and faint during and after the test but nothing specific to this antibody test. Risks can also include bruising at the venepuncture site. Serious complications such as an infection at the site where blood was taken and phlebitis (swelling of the vein) are possible but generally extremely unlikely.

Feedback

The team would really appreciate your feedback on your Antibody Testing experience. Please click on the link below to provide your feedback and help us to improve the service.

[Antibody Testing Service - Feedback Form](#)

Consent Form

- I confirm that I have read the above information; I understand that my participation is voluntary and I consent for this procedure.
- I have had the opportunity to consider the information and can confirm that I understand the nature and purpose of this procedure, together with the benefits and risks.
- I have confirmed a positive test will not mean at this point that I am immune and therefore I will continue to behave as if I might get or pass on the infection
- I declare that the information I have given on this form is correct and complete.

First name

Surname

Signature

Date
