

New COVID-19 testing guidance commenced 1st April 2024

Although COVID-19 is still circulating in England, outbreaks, hospitalisations, mortality and severity of infection are much reduced.

COVID-19 vaccination remains high in adult social care settings and people at highest risk from severe illness still have access to COVID-19 treatments.

The combination of standard infection control procedures, vaccination, treatments, and proportionate outbreak control measures help to keep people safe.

Therefore, some of the remaining highly targeted COVID-19 testing has ended 1 April 2024

People who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments and have symptoms of acute respiratory infection should take a LFD test immediately and follow the [guidance for people who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments](#)

Eligibility for COVID-19 treatments:

Those who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments include:

- those who are at highest risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. Those at highest risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 **now includes all residents over the age of 70.**
- people with:
 - Down's syndrome, or another chromosomal condition that affects the immune system.
 - certain types of cancer or had treatment for certain types of cancer.
 - sickle cell disease.
 - certain conditions affecting the blood, including some types of blood cancer.
 - chronic kidney disease (CKD) stage 4 or 5, including people on dialysis.
 - severe liver disease. Had an organ transplant.
 - certain autoimmune or inflammatory conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease.
 - HIV or AIDS and have a weakened immune system.
 - a condition affecting the immune system.
 - a condition affecting the brain or nervous system, such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, motor neurone disease, myasthenia gravis, Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease, or certain types of dementia.
 - certain lung conditions or treatments for lung conditions.
- people aged 85 and over.
- people with end-stage heart failure who have a long-term ventricular assistance device.
- people on the organ transplant waiting list.
- people aged 70 years and over, living in a care home.
- people who have a BMI of 35 kg/m² or more, diabetes or heart failure, and are resident in a care home, or are already hospitalised.

This list is a summary (valid from 01/04/2024) and does not cover every condition. If unsure about eligibility, speak to a doctor or hospital specialist.

The full guidance for infection prevention and control (IPC) in adult social care: acute respiratory infection (ARI) can be found by clicking [here](#)

Care home staff need to:

- know which residents are eligible for COVID-19 treatments. Remember, this now includes residents who are over 70 years of age, in addition to those with medical conditions on the list above.
- ensure there is a minimum stock of 3 LFD tests available at all times for each eligible resident. (LFD tests need to be regularly checked to ensure they are in date).
- access free COVID-19 LFD tests through a local participating pharmacy. **Care homes will need to check their local pharmacy for LFD stocks.** Later in 2024 the [service finder](#) will include LFD tests. Care homes should ensure their nhs.net emails are active and are signed up to this service (this service is useful for sourcing end of life meds, out of hours meds etc).
- test the resident as soon as possible after onset of symptoms to gain access to treatments in good time.
- test the resident on 3 consecutive days. This only applies if the first and second tests are negative.
- record the results and report all symptomatic ARI cases and LFD test results (negative, positive and void) to ipc@cumberland.gov.uk
- support eligible residents to access COVID-19 testing and treatments.
- all residents with respiratory symptoms should be reported to ipc@cumberland.gov.uk. This includes chest infections, pneumonia, influenza etc.
- all residents with respiratory symptoms should be supported to keep their distance from other residents for a minimum of 5 days.

Surplus LFDs

- LFD stock that is in-date can be used to test symptomatic individuals who are eligible for COVID-19 treatments. Use these tests first so they do not go to waste.

Expired LFDs

- One carton of expired test kits can be disposed of in general household rubbish or as clinical waste. The outer box the test kits came in can be recycled. If there is more than one carton, inform the waste contractor for the home that unused test kits need to be disposed of.

COVID-19 Spring booster 2024

COVID-19 is more serious in older people and in people with certain underlying health conditions. For these reasons, people aged 75 years and over, those in care homes, and those aged 6 months and over with a weakened immune system are being offered a spring dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 spring boosters should be available in care homes from 15th April 2024.

Vaccines in use this spring

- Anyone receiving a COVID-19 booster will receive a dose of the vaccine made by Pfizer Moderna which are approved in the UK. These vaccines have been updated since the original vaccines and target different COVID-19 variants.
- These updated vaccines boost protection well and give slightly higher levels of antibody against the more recent strains of COVID-19 (Omicron) than the vaccines received previously.

IPC Advice, Support, Information & Resources:

- Advice, support, and information for care home staff on the management of all infections: E.g., COVID-19; MRSA; CDI; *E. coli*; Scabies
- Advice & support to undertake a range of care home IPC audits to national standard.
- Support safe hospital discharge for residents who have been treated for an infection.
- IPC annual training programme (2023/24) & bespoke IPC courses for care home managers, clinical staff, IPC link champions, care and domestic staff.
- Advice & support on new builds & extensions to meet IPC specifications.

A wide range of excellent **IPC policies and procedures** are available to help you to manage infections in your care homes. Please follow the link below: [Care Services Cumberland - Policies and Procedures | Cumbria County Council](#)

Training Dates for Your Diary

April

- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024
Tuesday 23rd April 11am-12.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)

May

- Infection prevention and control training for residential care settings 2024
Tuesday 7th May 1pm-3.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024
Thursday 23rd May 1pm-2.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)

June

- Infection prevention and control training for residential care settings 2024
Thursday 6th June 10am-12.30pm [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- Infection prevention and control training for community-based services 2024
Wednesday 26th June 10am-11.30am [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Webinars

April

- Oral Hygiene webinar for all care settings Thursday 25th April 2pm-3:30pm
[Click here to join the meeting](#)

May

- Hand Hygiene & Gloves Off Campaign webinar Thursday 30th May 2pm-3pm
[Join the meeting now](#)