

UPDATED COVID Q&A

What are the changes to the self-isolation period from Monday 17th January?

This change that came into effect in England on Monday 17 January and applies to all positive cases, regardless of vaccination status.

People who are self-isolating with COVID-19 can reduce their isolation period after 5 full days if they test negative with an LFD test on both day 5 and day 6 and they do not have a temperature. For example, if they test negative on the morning of day 5 and the morning of day 6, they can return to their education or childcare setting immediately on day 6.

The first test must be taken no earlier than day 5 of the self-isolation period, and the second must be taken the following day. All test results should be [reported to NHS Test and Trace](#).

If the result of either test is positive, they should continue to self-isolate until they get negative results from two LFD tests on consecutive days or until they have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest.

The new rules also apply to people who are already isolating – so if someone was already isolating before Monday 17 January, they can take LFD tests on day 5 and 6 and if they are both negative and they have no temperature they can end their isolation.

Anyone who is unable to take LFD tests or anyone who continues to have a temperature will need to complete the full 10-day period of self-isolation.

When calculating someone's isolation period where they test positive on an LFD and have symptoms other than the main COVID-19 symptoms, does the isolation period start from the onset of those symptoms or the positive test?

For both adults and children, the main symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- *a high temperature*
- *a new, continuous cough*
- *a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia)*

If you develop any of the main symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and self-isolate immediately. If individuals do have any of the above symptoms of COVID-19, their isolation period begins on the day these symptoms began.

If a person tests positive and is asymptomatic (does not have any of the above symptoms of COVID-19), the self-isolation period begins on the day of the positive test, and they should self-isolate as soon as they receive the results. The DFE guidance states that all confirmed cases (vaccinated or unvaccinated) can potentially return to work on day 8, following negative LFT tests on days 6 and 7. However, the guidance relating to close contacts of confirmed cases differentiates between unvaccinated and vaccinated, with unvaccinated having to self-isolate for 10 days with no provision for a day 8 return, while vaccinated staff may return far earlier following negative PCR tests.

For close contacts of positive cases the current regime remains the same. Fully vaccinated close contacts are still advised to take daily LFD tests for seven days. Unvaccinated contacts must self-isolate for 10 days.

To ensure it strikes the right balance in line with the announcement on 13 January, the government will now consider the self-isolation rules for close contacts of people with Covid-19, including around the advice for fully vaccinated contacts to take daily LFDs for 7 days.