

INTRODUCTION

The requirement to self-isolate as a consequence of coronavirus infection is different in each of the devolved nations of the UK. Guidance changes regularly and members are advised to check the latest requirements for [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#).

Employers have a duty to take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to and spread of COVID-19. Reasonable measures include enabling workers to self-isolate if:

- They test positive
- They are a close contact of someone who has tested positive and they are not fully vaccinated.

This brief rounds up current requirements for each nation with effect from 24 February 2022 and will be updated with changes in advice or legislation.

This brief is not exhaustive nor a substitute for legal advice. ALP and its advisors exclude all liability for any claim or loss alleged to have arisen from or in connection with use of the information included within. Businesses rely on this at their own risk.

ENGLAND

People in England are no longer required by law to self-isolate. NHS guidance advises people to stay at home and avoid contact with other people if they:

- Have any of the [main symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- Have tested positive for COVID-19

People with COVID-19, should stay at home for up to 10 days from when their symptoms start although many people will no longer be infectious to others after 5 days.

People can do a rapid lateral flow test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day they had the test if they do not have symptoms) and another the next day.

If both tests are negative and they do not have a high temperature, they're less likely to pass COVID-19 to others and can go back to their normal routine.

If the test result is positive on day 5, they can carry on doing rapid lateral flow tests every day until they get 2 negative test results in a row.

During this time, people are advised not to go to work, school or public places.

SCOTLAND

In Scotland, people are only required to legally self-isolate in connection with international travel. The following advice is set out in public health guidance.

Self-isolation if you have coronavirus

People with symptoms of coronavirus should self-isolate immediately and [book a PCR test](#). If they test positive, they should self-isolate for 10 days from the date their symptoms started.

Asymptomatic people with a positive PCR or LFD test result should self-isolate for 10 days from the date of the test.

People with symptoms are very unlikely to infect others after the 10th day of illness and so once the 10 day self-isolation, period is completed, people can return to work (regardless of LFD results) as long as they feel better and do not have a high temperature.

Ending self-isolation early

People may end self-isolation early if they have 2 negative LFD test results in a row from day 6 onwards, taken 24 hours apart. For example, a negative LFD test result on day 6 and 7, day 7 and 8, or day 8 and 9 as long as they do not have a high temperature and follow the guidance for staying safe when they've ended self-isolation.

This guidance applies regardless of age, vaccination status or previous infection.

People who continue to test positive on LFD tests, or choose not to take LFD tests to end self-isolation early, can return to work and their usual activities on the 11th day after symptoms started, as long as they feel better and do not have a high temperature.

WALES

People in Wales are legally required to self-isolate on notification of a positive test result. A fixed penalty notice of up to £1,920 can be issued for breaches along with prosecution which can lead to an unlimited fine.

People with any of the main symptoms of COVID-19, must self-isolate and [book a PCR test](#) as soon as possible.

People who have had a positive Lateral Flow Test (LFT), should [report the result](#). They are no longer required to book a follow-up PCR test unless:

- They have been advised to take a PCR test because they are in a clinically vulnerable group who may need early access to treatment.
- They have been advised to do so as part of a research or surveillance programme.

Self-isolation is for a minimum of 5 full days, with day 1 being the day after symptoms started or the day after a positive test (whichever is earlier).

In common with the guidance for Scotland, LFT's may be taken from day 5 and people may leave self-isolation after 2 negative LFT's on consecutive days. This means that the earliest people may leave self-isolation is on day 6. If an LFT test is positive, people should continue taking daily tests until there are two negative daily tests in a row, or until day 10 – whichever is sooner.

People may leave self-isolation on day 10, irrespective of LFT results, but should continue to self isolate if they have a high temperature or feel unwell.

Close contacts

Unvaccinated adults who are notified by a contact tracer that they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19:

- Must self-isolate for 10 days. Day 1 is the day they were last in contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19.
- Take a LFT test on day 2 and day 8 – if the result is positive, people must self-isolate for at least 5 full days starting from the date the LFT test was taken and [report the result](#)
- Must continue to self-isolate even if the tests are negative

People who are not able to be vaccinated for a clinical reason, must self-isolate for 10 days, even if their LFT is negative.

Fully vaccinated adults do not need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact but should take a daily LFT (unless exempt for medical reasons) before they leave the house for the first time each day and [report all tests results on GOV.UK](#) even if negative or void. Tests should be continued for 7 full days after they were told they have been a contact, or until 10 days since the last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier.

Employment and self-isolation

In no circumstances should people return to work during the self-isolation period or if the results of the tests taken on day 5 or 6 are positive.

If as a result of an employer's action, a person fails to self-isolate when required to do so, the employer may be guilty of an offence and could face a fine up to £10,000.

NORTHERN IRELAND

There is no legal requirement to self-isolate. People are advised to self-isolate if they have symptoms of Coronavirus, have tested positive for Coronavirus or are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and they are not fully vaccinated

People with symptoms should begin self-isolating, [book a PCR test](#) and continue to isolate until the result of the test is available.

People should self-isolate for 10 days from the date of a positive test or the date symptoms started, whichever is sooner.

Again, LFT's may be taken from day 5 and people may leave self-isolation after 2 negative LFT's on consecutive days. This means that the earliest people may leave self-isolation is on day 6. If an LFT test is positive, people should continue taking daily tests until there are two negative daily tests in a row, or until day 10 – whichever is sooner.

People can leave self-isolation on day 10, irrespective of LFT results, but should continue to self-isolate if they have a high temperature or feel unwell.

Unvaccinated adults who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 must self-isolate for 10 days. Day 1 is the day they were last in contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 and should not end self-isolation early.

Fully vaccinated adults who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 are advised to isolate and take a lateral flow device (LFD) test as soon as possible. If this is negative, they may stop isolating and take daily lateral flow tests (ideally before leaving the house) until the tenth day after the last date of contact with the positive case

If any lateral flow test is positive, people should isolate immediately and report the result.

Most people do not need to book a PCR to confirm the result. However, people who are eligible for new [COVID-19 treatments](#) and some other groups should book a PCR test.

If at any time people develop symptoms, they should self-isolate immediately and book a PCR, even if the lateral flow test is negative.

© ALP Briefs and Guidance are available free of charge to members from the [ALP Help Centre](#)