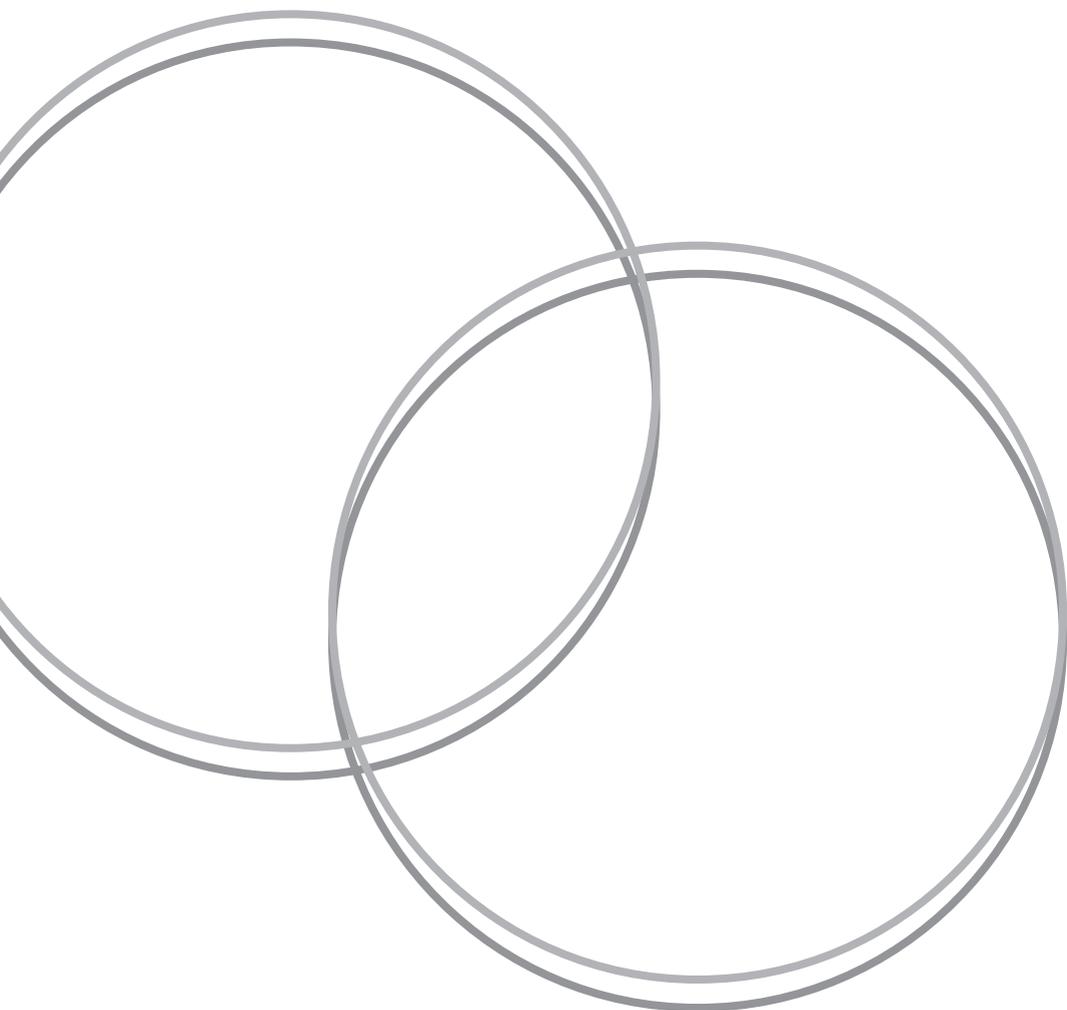




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Coronavirus (COVID-19) antibody testing

Information for patients



Coronavirus (COVID-19) antibody testing

You have been given this leaflet because you have been offered a COVID-19 antibody test today.

The information in this leaflet explains

- what an antibody test is
- what the results mean
- what you can expect after being tested.

What is an antibody test?

Antibodies are substances that your body produces in response to viruses and other infections in your blood.

They are one of your body's ways of fighting disease. This antibody test is used to detect antibodies your body may have produced against the COVID-19 virus. The test involves taking a small amount of your blood and testing it for these antibodies. The antibody test is different to the swab test for COVID-19 that collects fluid from your nose and throat to check whether you have the virus now.

What do antibody test results mean?

A positive antibody test shows that you have developed antibodies to the virus. This indicates that you have had the virus, even if you have not had symptoms.

The immune system is the name given to the different ways in which your body fights infections. Your immune system might have responded to the virus even if you did not feel ill and did not know you had COVID-19.

Knowing this information helps us to understand how many of the population have already had the virus. However, the test is not guaranteed to identify everyone who has had the virus. Some people who have been infected may still have a negative test.

It is important to stay alert even if you test positive for antibodies to the virus. COVID-19 is a new disease, and we are still learning how the immune system reacts to it. We do not know, for example, how long antibodies can work against the virus. We also don't know if having antibodies means you can't pass the virus on to others, or become ill with COVID-19 again yourself.

We will understand the virus better as we carry out more studies and collect more evidence.

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

No. There is no evidence yet to say that if you have already had the virus you are immune. Official advice from the World Health Organisation is clear about this.

You should continue to practice social distancing measures and to follow Government guidelines. You must also do everything you can, such as frequently washing your hands, to prevent the spread of the virus.

When and how will I be told the result?

It usually takes 24 - 48 hours from taking the blood test before the result is available. If you are an inpatient staying in the hospital, the medical team looking after you will tell you your test result.

If you are an outpatient, or have already left the hospital when the result becomes available, the medical team that organised the test will write to your GP. They will also send a copy of the letter to you.

How else will my information be used?

Your result will be made anonymous so that there is no link between your test and personal information like your name. Results from across the country will provide information about the amount of COVID-19 in different regions. This will help organisations like Public Health England understand better how the disease spreads.

Are there any risks to having the test?

Taking a sample of blood is a routine procedure that many people experience for many different reasons. While the procedure is safe, there are some risks related to having any kind of blood test.

These might include feeling dizzy or faint during or after the test, or bruising where the needle entered your skin. Serious complications such as infection in the place where blood was taken or phlebitis (swelling of the vein) are possible, but extremely unlikely. There are no specific risks related to this antibody test.

If you have any questions about this, please do speak to the team looking after you. They will be happy to explain everything in more detail and answer your questions.

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.

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Based on NHS England Information for Employees undergoing testing for COVID-19 antibodies

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