

Your Questions Answered –

Rapid Covid Testing and Vaccine Rollout in Harrow

Rapid Testing

1. What is this new Rapid Covid test about?

There is currently a very high Coronavirus (Covid-19) infection rate in the Harrow area with some residents having Covid-19 without knowing it, because they do not show or feel any symptoms. To help locate the infected residents, and break the chain of infection, we've introduced Rapid COVID testing for people who are not showing any symptoms of Covid-19.

Also known as a Lateral Flow Test (LFT), Rapid COVID testing gives a positive or negative COVID result in approximately 30-40 minutes.

2. Who can access the rapid test? I am a carer/teacher/shop worker. Can I get one? Can non-frontline workers get one?

Anyone can access the rapid Covid test. If you are a carer/teacher/frontline worker, you should be getting tested twice weekly. Even if you are a home worker, who does weekly shops at the supermarket, you could test once a week on the way to the supermarket.

Lateral Flow Tests have a short turnaround time and are specifically aimed at identifying anyone who does not have symptoms of COVID-19 but who may be infectious so could still pass it onto someone else. The tests help to protect them and other members of the community - particularly those at highest risk.

3. How often should I get tested?

If you have no symptoms and you are:

- *A key worker*
- *Unable to work from home*
- *Live with a key worker or someone who can't work from home*

Do have an LFT twice weekly (with a minimum 3 days between each test). This can help protect you, your colleagues and your loved ones from the virus.

4. Will the rapid test kits be issued for schools in the future to avoid constant weekly tests and travel?

LFTs are being used in schools to routinely test staff. The situation is under constant review from central government.

5. How do I get the LFT? How are the test results sent back?

You can book the test via <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/test> There are currently 5 sites across Harrow :

- St Ann's Shopping Cent, Harrow
- Harrow Arts Centre, Hatch End
- Cambridge Road Car Park, North Harrow
- Civic Centre (Building 5 and 6), Harrow and Wealdstone
- Shree Swaminarayan Temple, Stanmore

The results of your test are texted to you if you have a mobile phone. If not, you can receive the test result by email.

6. There is some concern that lateral flow tests are inaccurate. How can we rely on them ?

LFTs successfully identify 77% of Covid-19 infections, and 95% of those that are highly infectious.

Their sensitivity is dependent on how well the test is carried out; our staff are experienced and well trained to perform the tests.

7. Are test centres only for Harrow residents?

If you live or work in Harrow, then you can book a test in Harrow.

8. What is the provision for booking testing for people who do not have internet access?

People with symptoms can book a PCR test by calling 119. For Rapid Lateral Flow Tests, they need to ask a friend or relative to book one for them, if possible.

9. You said that families of key workers can be tested using the Rapid Lateral Flow tests. Does this include children who live with them ?

The test is not approved for under 16s in a community setting.

10. Since nurseries remain open, do Early Years teachers have to get tested twice weekly?

The advice is that people in such settings should get tested twice a week.

Vaccine rollout and Prioritisation

11. Which vaccines are available in Harrow currently?

Both Pfizer and Astra Zeneca vaccines are currently being used in Harrow, although the Moderna vaccine has also been approved in the UK.

12. My relative is clinically vulnerable but hasn't been offered a vaccine yet. When will she get one?

Covid vaccination is being offered to at risk groups in order of priority, Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents will be invited by their GP according to where they are on the national priority list which can be accessed at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-care-home-and-healthcare-settings-posters/covid-19-vaccination-first-phase-priority-groups>

13. I work in a nursery or school. When are teaching staff going to be considered as a priority for the vaccine?

Right now, teachers and nursery staff are not included in the phase 1 priority groups. Priority has been given to those people who will be most at risk of severe disease and death. We are awaiting further government guidelines about the provision for teaching staff.

14. How is Harrow getting on with vaccinating prioritised groups? Are we on track?

We are certainly on track. As of 2nd February, we have vaccinated about 85 per cent of our 80+ population, and we are making good progress to complete all over 70s and Clinically Extremely Vulnerable housebound patients.

15. Some people report already having had their second dose. Why is this? I thought the plan was to give everyone one dose to increase the amount of population having one dose each.

This would have been because of a planned second dose before the policy change

16. My husband is clinically extremely vulnerable. He is 75 and, luckily, he is getting his vaccine tomorrow. I am his registered carer and in receipt of Carer's Allowance, but I am 69 and I won't be vaccinated for a while. I am extremely concerned that, should I catch Covid, he will not get the care he needs. Why are spouses who are carers not being vaccinated at the same time?

This is a very difficult situation and we fully appreciate your concerns. It was decided by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation that the most vulnerable people should receive the vaccine first, therefore some carers may not yet be in those most vulnerable groups. This policy is intended to save the greatest number of lives possible.

17. I am over 70 and have not been vaccinated yet. What should I do?

People aged 70 and over and residents who are shielding who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID and who would like to be, can now contact the NHS to arrange a jab here www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination

18. Can people can turn up at vaccination services without an appointment?

No. People will still need to make an appointment in advance before going to any vaccination service. This is important because booking slots are carefully managed to allow for social distancing and the number of appointments is based on the supply available that day.

Vaccine Efficacy and Safety

- 19. What are the efficacy rates of the three approved vaccines? What does it mean when they say a vaccine is X% effective?**

The three vaccines that have been approved have a high level of effectiveness - 95% for Pfizer and Moderna and about 90% for the AstraZeneca (Oxford) vaccine. This means that up to 95% of people receiving the vaccine will not develop a severe infection to Covid-19. However, we do not know if the vaccine will prevent the virus from spreading from one person to the next, therefore we must still continue to wash our hands, wear masks and keep 2 metres apart.

- 20. I am weak and unwell because of my age or underlying health conditions, so I worried that the Covid-19 vaccine will make me worse.**

The Covid vaccines are suitable for a range of long-term conditions, such as respiratory and heart disease, diabetes and those with weakened immune systems. Providing you do not have a current Covid infection, or other temporary sickness, the Covid vaccine will equip your body with a better defence against future Covid infection. Both vaccines are very safe and only a

- 21. Will your GP decide whether you are suitable for vaccine first?**

A very small number of people can't have the vaccine. If you are in any doubt about your personal circumstances, talk to your hospital consultant or GP. The medical team at the vaccination sites will also ask you several questions to determine your personal circumstance.

- 22. My father in law age 85 is allergic to gelatine containing IV fluid, gelofusine and Haemaccel medication and is still awaiting clarification to whether he can have the vaccine. When will he get this clarification please ?**

You will be asked a number of questions about your allergies before the nurse or doctor vaccinates you. Following close surveillance of the initial roll-out, the MHRA has advised that individuals with a history of anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction) to food, an identified drug or vaccine, or an insect sting can receive any COVID-19 vaccine, as long as they are not known to be allergic to any component (excipient) of the vaccine. For up-to-date information, see the information on the [NHS website](#). If you are in any doubt about your personal circumstances talk to your hospital consultant or GP.

- 23. I am on immuno-suppressive medication. Should I take the vaccine?**

The Covid vaccines are suitable for a range of long-term conditions, including those that cause weakened immune systems. The Covid-19 vaccine will equip your body with a better defence against future Covid infection.

Sometimes, in those with a weakened immune system, the immune response is not as strong as hoped. Both vaccines are very safe and only a very small number of people can't have the vaccine.

If you are in any doubt about your personal circumstances, talk to your hospital consultant or GP. The medical team at the vaccination sites will also ask you several questions to determine your personal circumstance.

24. Can you mix and match doses of different vaccines?

No, you will get a second dose of the same vaccine.

25. Could you please tell us how long we should wait to be in contact with anyone after the first vaccine? Do we have to wait for the second before we can? After the second vaccination will we be able to travel? We need to be able to travel as soon as we can to assist someone overseas with medical issues.

The restrictions on travel will remain in place even if you have had the vaccine. The vaccine has been proven to only reduce the number of people becoming severely infected with Covid, but it has not been proven to prevent one person from being able to spread the virus to another. Travel restrictions are controlled by central government and it is expected that they will only be eased when the infection is brought under control. We must continue to pay attention to wash our hands, wear a mask and keep our distance from other people.

26. When will all the GP surgeries start vaccinations?

GP surgeries will not be carrying out vaccinations in Harrow – they will be offered at the three main vaccination sites. This is to ensure we deliver at scale and pace to protect our residents as quickly as possible.

27. How effective after the vaccines after first dose? First, people were told the jabs will be three weeks apart, now it is three months. This is worrying.

The vaccines were assessed for effectiveness after 2 doses, assessing how effective they are after one dose is therefore complex. The current vaccines are approved for two doses between 4 and 12 weeks apart. The original roll out was for the second dose to be administered after 3 weeks, but Central government changed the emphasis to vaccinating as many priority groups as possible with at least one dose, as a consequence the period between doses was extended to 12 weeks. However, the latest data from Oxford indicate that post-vaccination protection does not fall in three months following the first dose, which supports the UK government decision.

Vaccination Centre and Access Questions

28. Where are the vaccination centres in Harrow? Can you choose a venue which provides the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine or the Pfizer vaccine, if prefer one above the other?

The vaccination centres in Harrow are in the following locations: Byron Hall; The Hive; Tithe Farm Sports and Social Club. This is, however, subject to change.

There is only one vaccine on every site, so you won't be able to choose. Most sites use the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines as they are easier to store.

29. Although we live in Harrow, since we previously lived in Barnet, we are registered with a GP practice in Barnet. Which borough will deal with our vaccinations? We are private residents in Harrow.

Patients will be given the vaccination appointment that becomes available when their priority group is reached and this could be in any of the nearby centres.

30. I have been offered vaccines through a letter as well as a text message, with different choices of location. Why is this?

The vaccination has been rolled out incredibly rapidly and there are different systems involved in calling people in. It is considered better that people are possibly contacted twice. This is a huge logistical challenge and will be a bit bumpy for a short while but it is getting clearer and better every day.

31. I have seen a pharmacy in Harrow providing vaccinations. Is this legitimate?

A small number of pharmacies have started to provide vaccinations. This is likely to grow over the next few months. Pharmacists are highly skilled professionals and fully trained to vaccinate people. Every year they administer the flu vaccine to thousands of people.

32. Are the housebound being taken to a vaccination centre or will they be vaccinated at home?

They will be visited at home by medical professionals to deliver the vaccine.