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Briefing for MPs: COVID-19 testing kits now available from pharmacies

Introduction

Community pharmacies have remained open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, adapting to provide services in a COVID-secure way for their local communities and offering face-to-face advice and healthcare on a walk-in basis. As well as dispensing more than 1 billion prescription items, pharmacies have delivered healthcare advice at a rate of more than 48 million consultations per year.

Pharmacies are keen to support our recovery from the pandemic. Some are participating in the COVID-19 vaccination programme and now, a new service has been introduced, with the majority of pharmacies offering people access to rapid COVID-19 testing kits.

About 'Pharmacy Collect'

The 'Pharmacy Collect' service allows everyone in England to access lateral flow testing kits free of charge from local pharmacies to help improve access to regular, rapid COVID-19 testing.

The service is designed for adults who are asymptomatic and will be useful for those who might need to undertake regular COVID-19 tests, such as those who need to leave the house to go to work. Pharmacy teams can supply one box of tests per individual, with up to four boxes being provided per transaction (i.e. test kits for up to four individuals in one transaction). Each box contains seven tests for use at home, allowing for twice-weekly testing over a period of three weeks (plus an extra test). It is part of the Government's pledge to give everyone in England, including those without symptoms, access to two COVID-19 tests a week.

The tests are to be self-administered away from the pharmacy, but pharmacy teams will provide key information to the public when collecting their test kits, including advice on the importance of reporting results.

The service is funded by NHS Test and Trace, whose research into routine mass testing showed that participants preferred to access testing in the community and that pharmacists are trusted by their local communities, leading to a Government decision to commission this service through community pharmacies.

Although the service is optional, in the first few weeks, 9 out of 10 pharmacies in England signed up to deliver the service, as announced by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. An online checker has been launched so people can [find their nearest pharmacy offering testing kits](#) by simply entering their postcode.

Community pharmacists are proud to be able to do their bit to help people return to work and education through this new testing service. This is just one of many examples of how pharmacy teams have helped support patients, the public and the nation during the pandemic, through continued access to medicines and healthcare advice, as well as contributing to COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

Contact

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