

A colorful speech bubble graphic with a gradient from blue to red, containing the text 'Patient Information' in white.

**Patient
Information**

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Antibody Test

Antibody tests are used to detect antibodies to the COVID-19 virus to see if you have previously had the virus. The test works by taking a blood sample and testing for the presence of antibodies to see if you have developed an immune response to the virus.

Antibody tests differ to virus swab (PCR) tests, which test to see if you currently have the virus.

There is no strong evidence yet to suggest that those who have had the virus develop long-lasting immunity which would prevent them from getting the virus again.

Therefore, the value of antibody tests is currently limited to answering the question of whether someone has had the virus or not, and providing data and a greater understanding on the spread of the virus.

Clinicians are able to request the tests for patients in both hospital and social care settings if they think it's appropriate.

What getting an antibody test will tell you?

A positive antibody test will tell you whether you've previously had the virus that causes COVID-19 and that your body has produced an immune response.

There is no strong evidence yet to suggest that those who have been proven to have had the virus and to have produced antibodies are immune.

If you receive a positive antibody result it does not mean that you're immune, or that you cannot pass on the virus to others. It also does not mean that you can ignore social distancing measures.

Our understanding of the virus will grow as new scientific evidence and studies emerge. COVID-19 is a new disease, and our understanding of the body's immune response to it is limited. We do not know, for example, how long an antibody response lasts, whether the antibodies produced are effective in neutralising the virus, or whether having antibodies means a person cannot transmit the virus to others.



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In time, as the science develops and our understanding of the disease increases, we will have answers to these questions.

While the results of an antibody test will not allow people to make any changes to their behaviour, such as easing social distancing measures, there's clear value in knowing whether NHS and care workers and hospital patients and care home residents have had the virus, and in collecting data on the test results.

Smoking is not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites, smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

Document Control

Division: Corporate
Department: Infection Prevention & control
Approved Date: 4 June 2020
Next Review Date: July 2021
Document Number: Corp - PIL0037