

COVID-19 Antibody Testing – What You Need to Know

What is a COVID-19 antibody test and why are you asking me to take one?

Antibodies are made by the immune system to fight infection. A COVID-19 antibody blood test will identify whether you may have had COVID-19. We will use the result of the test to help us better understand how many Next Steps participants may have been infected with the virus which causes COVID-19, whether they realised it at the time or not.

Even if you don't think you have had COVID-19, please complete the test as it is possible to have the virus without realising it. It is also important for researchers to collect information on who does not have antibodies as well those who do. Even if you have had the COVID-19 vaccine, we would like you to take part.

We don't know yet if having antibodies gives someone long-lasting protection from the virus. The results of this study may help guide public health policy and the government's plan for its antibody testing strategy.

Other research studies in the UK are also asking their participants to complete the same antibody test. Analysing the information from the Next Steps, alongside these other studies, will give us a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on people's health and other aspects of life.

Who is being invited to take the antibody test?

We are inviting those who took part in at least one of our three recent COVID-19 surveys to take an antibody test. This will allow us to look at the results of the antibody test alongside your survey responses.

What is involved?

- If you agree to take part, we will send you a blood collection kit. It may be a few weeks before you receive your kit.
- Everything you need and full instructions on how to collect your blood, will be inside your blood collection kit.
- You will need to prick your finger and collect about 10 drops of blood into a small tube.
- A short video showing you what's in the kit, and how to use it, can be found on the Next Steps website: nextstepsstudy.org.uk/home/surveys/covid-19-survey
- You would then return the sample in the pre-paid envelope provided with the kit.
- We will test your blood for antibodies and let you know your results.
- We may also contact you again to ask you to provide another blood sample for antibody testing in the future.



How accurate is the test?

The antibody test will be conducted in a research lab, and not an NHS clinical-grade lab and is not 100% accurate or reliable at an individual level. The results will tell you if you have antibodies or not but cannot give a completely reliable individual diagnosis of whether you have had the virus. It is not known whether having COVID-19 antibodies will prevent re-infection so regardless of your test result you should continue to follow Government guidelines on self-isolation and social distancing and should be vaccinated when you are able.

When will I get my test result?

You will receive your test result by email within 4-6 weeks after you post your sample back.

What will happen to the sample I give?

When we asked if you would be willing to take part in this project we told you that any blood left over after the antibody test has been conducted may be stored for future research. We can now confirm that this will NOT happen. **Any blood which is left over after the antibody test has been conducted will be destroyed by the laboratory.**

Do I have to take part?

No. Choosing to take part in the study is entirely up to you. If you decide not to participate, this decision will not in any way affect your continued participation in Next Steps study or any NHS treatment you receive. If after receiving your kit you decide you do not want to take part, you can return the kit to the laboratory and your sample will be destroyed.

What are the possible risks or side-effects of taking part?

Collecting the blood sample requires a finger prick which can feel like a little pinch and which may cause some people a small amount of discomfort. **You should not take part if you have a medical condition which means you are at increased risk of bleeding or you are currently taking any anti-coagulant medication such as warfarin.**

What if I change my mind after giving a blood sample?

Please let us know. Our contact details are at the end of this leaflet and on the study website: www.nextstepsstudy.org.uk.

Who is carrying out this research project?

This research is funded by the UK Research Institute and is being conducted by Next Steps team at the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at UCL. We are working with a company called Thriva, who are experts at conducting health tests. Your name and address will be passed to Thriva so that they can send you a kit. They will destroy this information once the kits have been posted. The blood test kit will be returned to Thriva for analysis and the result of your test will be provided to the Next Steps team. Thriva will not link your test result with your contact details. We are also working with Kantar Public, the organisation who are conducting the COVID-19 Surveys on our behalf. Kantar Public have emailed you to invite you to take part in this research and will also send you your test result. Thriva and Kantar Public are contractually bound to UCL to keep your data safe and secure, and are accredited to data security standards.



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What will happen to my test result?

The result of your test will be made securely available to researchers along with other information you have provided to the study, to look at the impact of coronavirus on people's lives. Thriva will retain your test result but this will not be linked with your personal details. We are also legally obliged to share the results of the antibody tests with Public Health England. Public Health England may share this information with equivalent bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. **The results shared with these organisations will not include any information that would allow you to be identified.**

How will you keep my information safe?

Your personal details, the results of your antibody test and your blood sample will all be treated in the strictest confidence in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For full information about this please visit the Next Steps website:

nextstepsstudy.org.uk/faqs/#privacy-and-data-protection

What if I have more questions?

You can find more information on the Next Steps website:

nextstepsstudy.org.uk/faqs/#covid19antibody

You can also contact us at: nextsteps@ucl.ac.uk or **0800 977 4566**



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