

Living with Covid: the end of routine testing in schools, colleges and childcare settings

From 1 April, routine testing will no longer be expected in all education and children's social care settings. This is part of the government's plan to remove remaining restrictions on society while protecting the most vulnerable from COVID-19.

Dame Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said: As we learn to live with Covid, we are focusing our testing provision on those at higher risk of serious outcomes from the virus, while encouraging people to keep following simple steps to help keep themselves and others safe.

Below we answer your questions on the end of testing in education.

What's changing?

From Friday 1 April we will no longer be recommending regular asymptomatic testing in SEND, Alternative Provision and Children Social Care Settings. In the event of an outbreak, a local health protection team may advise some targeted outbreak testing in residential SEND settings.

Why do you no longer recommend Covid testing in schools, colleges or other education settings?

Following expert advice, we now know that Covid presents a low risk of serious illness to most children and young people, and most of those who are fully vaccinated. Due to high immunity in society, a greater understanding of the virus and improved access to treatments, we can now focus on how we live with COVID-19.

That means we don't expect pupils or staff in education settings to routinely test themselves for COVID-19. Outbreak testing will be available in residential SEND settings where it is advised by the local health protection team, especially to counteract the risk of closure due to staff absence. We continue to encourage young people to get vaccinated. If your child has not been vaccinated.

Should my child still go to their childcare or education setting if they test positive for Covid?

No. From 1 April, anyone with a positive COVID-19 test result will be advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for five days, which is when they are most infectious. For children and young people aged 18 and under, the advice will be at least three days.

Will my child's school or college still be taking measures to prevent Covid?

- All settings should have in place baseline infection prevention and control measures that will help to manage the spread of infection:
- Ensuring all eligible groups are enabled and supported to take up the offer of national vaccination programmes including COVID-19 and flu.
- Ensuring occupied spaces are well-ventilated and let fresh air in.
- Reinforcing good hygiene practices such as hand washing and cleaning.

Can my child still get a Covid-19 vaccine?

From 1st April the in-school COVID-19 vaccination programme will come to an end. However, 12 to 15 year olds will still be able to access the vaccine outside of schools at a vaccination centre, pharmacy or walk-in centre. Parents can book a Covid-19 vaccination appointment online or by speaking to their GP or calling 119. Alternatively, they can find a walk-in Covid-19 vaccination site. From April, healthy 5-11 year olds will also be offered the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccinations will take place outside of schools in vaccination centres, pharmacies, GPs and walk-in centres. Parents of 5-11 year olds will receive a letter from the NHS with further information. Online bookings for 5-11 year olds will open in April.