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Friday 3 November 2023

Via email

To:

- General practice colleagues, via ICB local communication colleagues please
- ICB Heads of Medicines Management
- Provider chief pharmacists, via WYAAT communication colleagues please
- Primary care leads

Cc:

- COVID-19 medicines delivery project group
- West Yorkshire Clinical and Care Leadership Forum members
- West Yorkshire Pharmacy Lead
- Local Medical Committees
- West Yorkshire Primary and Community Care Programme Senior Responsible / Lead.

Dear colleagues

Community-based COVID treatments – changes to lateral flow test supply – November 2023

And a reminder on how to access the COVID Medicines Distribution Unit (CMDU)

- From 6 November 2023 patients potentially eligible for treatment from the CMDU will now be able to pick up free rapid lateral flow tests from a local pharmacy. This will replace the current online and telephone ordering services for free lateral flow tests provided by GOV.UK and 119.
- When picking up lateral flow tests, the pharmacy may ask questions about a person's medical history to confirm they're eligible for free tests. If the person requiring the test has a letter from the NHS stating this they should take it with them to prove eligibility for COVID-19 treatments. A letter or email is not essential but it will help to more easily and quickly confirm a person's eligibility.

- If the person is unable to collect tests themselves, someone else can collect free tests on their behalf. If the person requiring the tests does not have a friend, relative or carer who can do this for you then they may be able to book a [volunteer responder](#) by calling 0808 196 3646.
- Anyone collecting free tests on behalf of another person should provide the pharmacy with the details of the person requiring the tests and any relevant letters or e-mails about COVID treatments, if they have them. The required details include:
 - The medical condition(s) confirming the patient's eligibility
 - The patient's NHS number (if available)
 - The patient's full name
 - The patient's date of birth
 - The patient's address.

How to access the CMDU

- **People who require this service will be expected to keep lateral flow tests at home in case they develop symptoms of COVID.** People requiring this service are able to collect free tests from local pharmacies from 6th November onwards. In addition to this these tests continue to be available to buy from a retail pharmacies and supermarkets
- **People requiring this service who develop COVID symptoms will need to self-test or arrange for someone else to perform a lateral flow test on them.**
- **On testing positive contact should be made with NHS111** who will refer them into the CMDU
- **After assessment by CMDU colleagues, if a prescription and dispensing of treatment is required this will continue to be undertaken by LCD clinicians and current providers.**

In addition to this Local Care Direct can also receive direct email referrals from clinicians where necessary. Referrals should be sent to cmdu@lcdwestyorks.nhs.uk

If you have any queries or comments regarding the above, please do let me know.

Kind regards,



David Smith
NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, Chief Pharmacist

Attached:

- Key messages
- COVID treatments briefing and FAQs.

Community-based COVID treatments – Changes to lateral flow test supply – November 2023

Key lines

- The NHS offers treatment to people with COVID-19 who are at the highest risk of becoming seriously ill. More information on who is eligible is available at www.nhs.uk/COVIDtreatments
- Local NHS organisations are responsible for arranging COVID-19 treatments. The way you get treatment may depend on where you live. Your [local integrated care board \(ICB\)](#) can give you more information.

How to get hold of COVID tests

- If you're eligible for COVID-19 treatments, you should keep rapid lateral flow tests at home.
- From 6 November 2023, eligible patients will be able to pick up free rapid lateral flow tests from a local pharmacy. This will replace the current online and telephone ordering services for free lateral flow tests provided by GOV.UK and 119.
- When picking up lateral flow tests, the pharmacy may ask you questions about your medical history to confirm you're eligible for free tests. If you have a copy of a letter or email sent to you by the NHS that says you're eligible for COVID-19 treatments, please bring this with you. A letter or email is not essential but it will help to more easily and quickly confirm your eligibility.
- Someone else can collect free tests on your behalf. If you do not have a friend, relative or carer who can do this for you then you may be able to book a [volunteer responder](#) by calling 0808 196 3646.
- Anyone collecting free tests on your behalf should provide the pharmacy with your details and any relevant letters or e-mails about COVID treatments, if you have them. The required details include:
 - The medical condition(s) confirming the patient's eligibility
 - The patient's NHS number (if available)
 - The patient's full name
 - The patient's date of birth
 - The patient's address

How to get treatment

- If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, take a test as soon as possible, even if your symptoms are mild. Only take a test if you have symptoms.
- If your test result is positive, call NHS 111 or hospital specialist as soon as possible. They will be able to decide if you need a referral for an assessment for COVID-19 treatment.
- If your test result is negative, but you still have symptoms of COVID-19, continue to test once a day for the next two days.

Q & A – Lines for answering queries only

I used to be able to order test kits online or by ringing 119 - Why has this changed?

The gov.uk ordering portal and 119 were established in response to the pandemic. As we learn to manage COVID-19 more in line with other respiratory illness, we need to move to routine NHS services that enable patients to access COVID-19 tests. Community pharmacies are well placed in local communities to provide this service for patients.

What if pharmacies aren't ready to provide tests on 6 November?

We anticipate that many pharmacies will have stock and be ready to provide free lateral flow tests from 6 November to eligible patients. However, to ensure a smooth transition, the current [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and 119 telephone ordering services will not immediately close on 6 November. These services will remain available for a short period of time to provide patients with an additional way of getting hold of tests, while other pharmacies become ready to deliver this new service.

What happens if my nearest pharmacy doesn't have test kits when I need them?

We would advise you to visit other local pharmacies if your nearest one doesn't have any test kits in stock. They may be able to tell you which other local pharmacies are offering this service.

Patients are also advised to plan ahead and ensure that they always have sufficient test kits at home in advance of symptoms appearing (three tests for testing on three consecutive days, as required). This will avoid the need to urgently find a pharmacy to get hold of tests for immediate testing. Patients should not go into a pharmacy if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Do pharmacies deliver test kits?

Some pharmacies may be able to deliver test kits. Please discuss this with the pharmacy.

How many test kits will the pharmacy give me?

The pharmacy will provide eligible patients with one pack of five tests.

How often can I collect test kits from the pharmacy?

Eligible patients can return for further packs when required. Patients should ensure that they have at least three tests available at home at all times to allow them to test for three consecutive days once symptoms appear. They should only use these tests when they have symptoms.

My test kits are broken/damaged/incomplete. What do I do?

Please discuss this with the pharmacy that supplied your tests. They should be able to provide you with replacement tests.

Is the NHS writing to patients again? If they don't have a letter, how will they prove eligibility?

NHS England won't be writing out again to people as the digital systems that identify potentially eligible patients from their patient record are no longer available. A letter or email is not essential for getting hold of free tests from a pharmacy, but it will help to more easily and quickly confirm your eligibility.

Friday 3 November

Key messages: Treatments for COVID-19

Updates to go live on 6 November at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/treatments-for-covid-19/>

If you're eligible for free rapid lateral flow tests, you can now collect them from a local pharmacy. This is replacing the online and telephone ordering services for free rapid lateral flow tests provided by GOV.UK and NHS 119.

The NHS offers treatment to people who are at the highest risk of becoming seriously ill when they get COVID-19.

Who can have COVID-19 treatment

You're eligible for a COVID-19 treatment assessment, without being admitted to hospital, if all the following apply:

- you're at highest risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 (see below)
- you're aged 12 or over
- you have symptoms of COVID-19
- you have tested positive for COVID-19

Some treatments are also available through a national study to a wider group of people, including those aged 50 years old and over (or 18 years old and over with a health condition that puts them at increased risk of COVID-19).

Visit the [Panoramic trial website](#) if you're interested in taking part.

People at highest risk

You may be at highest risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 if you have:

- Down's syndrome, or another chromosomal condition that affects your immune system
- certain types of cancer, or had treatment for certain types of cancer
- sickle cell disease
- certain conditions affecting your blood, including some types of blood cancer
- chronic kidney disease (CKD) stage 4 or 5, including people on dialysis
- severe liver disease
- had an organ transplant
- certain autoimmune or inflammatory conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis or inflammatory bowel disease
- HIV or AIDS and have a weakened immune system
- a condition affecting your immune system

- a condition affecting the brain or nervous system, such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, motor neurone disease, myasthenia gravis, Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease or certain types of dementia
- certain lung conditions or treatments for lung conditions

This list is a summary and does not cover everything.

If you're unsure if you are eligible, speak to your doctor or hospital specialist who can advise you.

[Find out more about people at the highest risk who are eligible for COVID-19 treatment on the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence website](#)

Treatments for COVID-19

The treatments available for people at the highest risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19 are:

- [nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir \(Paxlovid\)](#)
- [sotrovimab \(Xevudy\)](#)
- [remdesivir \(Veklury\)](#)
- [molnupiravir \(Lagevrio\)](#)

Nirmatrelvir plus ritonavir, remdesivir and molnupiravir are antiviral medicines.

Sotrovimab is a neutralising monoclonal antibody (nMAb).

When being assessed for treatment, a doctor will advise on which treatment is suitable for you.

Some treatments come as capsules or tablets that you swallow. Others are given to you through a drip in your arm (infusion), usually in a hospital or local health centre.

These treatments can help some people manage their COVID-19 symptoms and reduce the risk of becoming seriously ill.

Information:

If you need to go into hospital for COVID-19, you may get other treatments.

How to get COVID-19 treatment

Local NHS organisations are responsible for arranging COVID-19 treatments. The way you get treatment will depend on where you live.

Your [local integrated care board \(ICB\)](#) can give you more information.

If you think you're in the highest risk group and need to access COVID-19 treatment, follow these steps to be considered for a referral.

1. Keep rapid lateral flow tests at home

If you're eligible for COVID-19 treatment, you should keep rapid lateral flow tests at home.

You can pick up free rapid lateral flow test kits from a local pharmacy if you're eligible for COVID-19 treatment.

The pharmacy may ask you questions about your medical history to confirm you're eligible for free tests. If you have a copy of a letter or email sent to you by the NHS that says you're eligible for COVID-19 treatment, take this with you. A letter or email is not essential, but it will help the pharmacy to confirm you're [eligible](#) for free tests.

Someone else can collect free tests on your behalf, for example, a friend, relative or carer. If you do not have a friend, relative or carer who can collect your tests for you, you may be able to book a [volunteer responder](#) by calling 0808 196 3646.

Anyone collecting free tests on your behalf needs to give the pharmacy your details, including your:

- full name
- address
- date of birth
- NHS number (if available)
- medical condition(s) to confirm your eligibility

They should also bring any copies of letters or emails that have been sent to you by the NHS about COVID-19 treatments.

2. Take a rapid lateral flow test if you get symptoms

If you have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), take a rapid lateral flow test as soon as possible, even if your symptoms are mild. Only take a test if you have symptoms.

You can also use tests you've paid for, for example, a test you've bought from a supermarket or pharmacy.

3. If your test is positive, call your GP surgery, NHS 111 or hospital specialist

Call NHS 111 or hospital specialist as soon as possible if your test result is positive.

They will be able to decide if you need a referral for an assessment for COVID-19 treatment, or may carry out the assessment themselves.

As part of the assessment, you may be asked what other medicines you take or receive, including any vitamins and minerals, so it's important to have a list of these ready.

If you're eligible for treatment, it's important to start the treatment as soon as you can. Treatments for COVID-19 need to be given quickly after your symptoms start to be effective.

If you are prescribed capsules or tablets, the medicine can be collected on your behalf by someone else, such as a friend or relative. You'll be advised where the medicine can be collected from. Alternatively, the NHS may be able to arrange for the medicine to be delivered to you.

If the treatment needs to be given as a drip in your arm (infusion), you'll usually get it at your local hospital or in a local health centre.

You'll get instructions on where to get the treatment and how to get there and back safely.

4. If your test is negative, do a total of 3 tests over 3 days

If your test result is negative, but you still have symptoms of COVID-19, you need to do a total of 3 rapid lateral flow tests over 3 days.

For example, if you did your first test today, you should do a 2nd test tomorrow and a 3rd test the day after.

If any test result is positive, you can stop testing and call your GP surgery, NHS 111 or hospital specialist as soon as possible.

More information on treatments for COVID-19

- [Find your ICB \(local integrated care board\) to access COVID treatments in your area](#)
- [GOV.UK: nirmatrelvir and ritonavir \(Paxlovid\) patient information leaflet](#)
- [GOV.UK: sotrovimab \(Xevudy\) patient information leaflet](#)
- [GOV.UK: molnupiravir \(Lagevrio\) patient information leaflet](#)

If you need information in easy read format you can read [information about treatments for COVID-19 on the NHS England website](#).