



UKHSA Care home infection readiness pack

Information for care homes in South East England

Winter 2025/26

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Key messages for care home managers	3
How to contact us	3
Be prepared	4
What has changed this year	4
What to do if a staff member is unwell	6
What to do if a resident is unwell	6
When to contact your local Health Protection Team (HPT)	7
How to use and report the Combo Rapid LFD results	8
How to take the test:	8
Understanding the results:	9
What to do with your Combo Rapid LFD test results:	9
In order to report on the online portal:	10
Step-by-Step: Reporting Test Results	11
Troubleshooting Tips	11
Preparation checklists	12
FAQ on UKHSA Combo Rapid LFDs	15
About UKHSA	16
Further resources	17
Cold weather	17
COVID-19	17
Flu	17
Norovirus	17
Pneumococcal disease	17
RSV (respiratory syncytial virus)	18
Shingles	18
Visiting guidance	18

Introduction

This pack provides information for care homes on preparing for the winter season and using the **new UKHSA Combo Rapid LFD tests**, to try and help avoid cases and manage outbreaks of infectious disease.

Care home residents and staff are susceptible to infections which increase over the winter months, such as respiratory and stomach infections. These are very infectious and can cause outbreaks due to close contact in residential settings.

Good infection control practices can help reduce the risk of outbreaks occurring.

This briefing provides:

- When to report to your local health protection team if residents are unwell (i.e you think you have an outbreak)
- How to use UKHSA Combo Rapid LFDs
- How to interpret results of UKHSA Combo Rapid LFDs
- What UKHSA Combo Rapid LFD results should be reported to your local health protection team
- How to upload results of UKHSA Combo Rapid LFDs
- What to do if a staff member is unwell
- Preparation checklists to help prevent and prepare for respiratory and norovirus infections

Key messages for care home managers

How to contact us

Our contact details are:

- a. Telephone (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm): 0344 225 3861
- b. Email (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm): SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk
- c. Out-of-hours telephone (Mon-Fri 5pm-9am, Saturday and Sunday, and Bank Holidays): 0344 225 3861

NOTE: For outbreaks of COVID, this can be usually done via email, unless there are urgent concerns.

Be prepared

- Have a stockpile of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Keep a supply of NHS COVID-19 LFD tests for residents eligible for treatment.
- Know where your UKHSA Combo Rapid LFD tests are
- Ensure all residents and staff are immunised against flu.
- Ensure all care home residents are immunised against COVID-19.
- Ensure eligible residents and staff are immunised against RSV.
- Ensure your residents over the age of 65 are immunised against pneumococcal infection.
- Ensure your residents aged 70 to 79 years (or any turning 65) are immunised against shingles.
- Ensure you have reviewed your infection control policy and staff are aware of the procedures.

Links for further information on vaccinations can be found in this document.

Please use the winter preparedness checklists ***as early as possible*** consider how to best prepare and prevent infections this winter.

What has changed this year

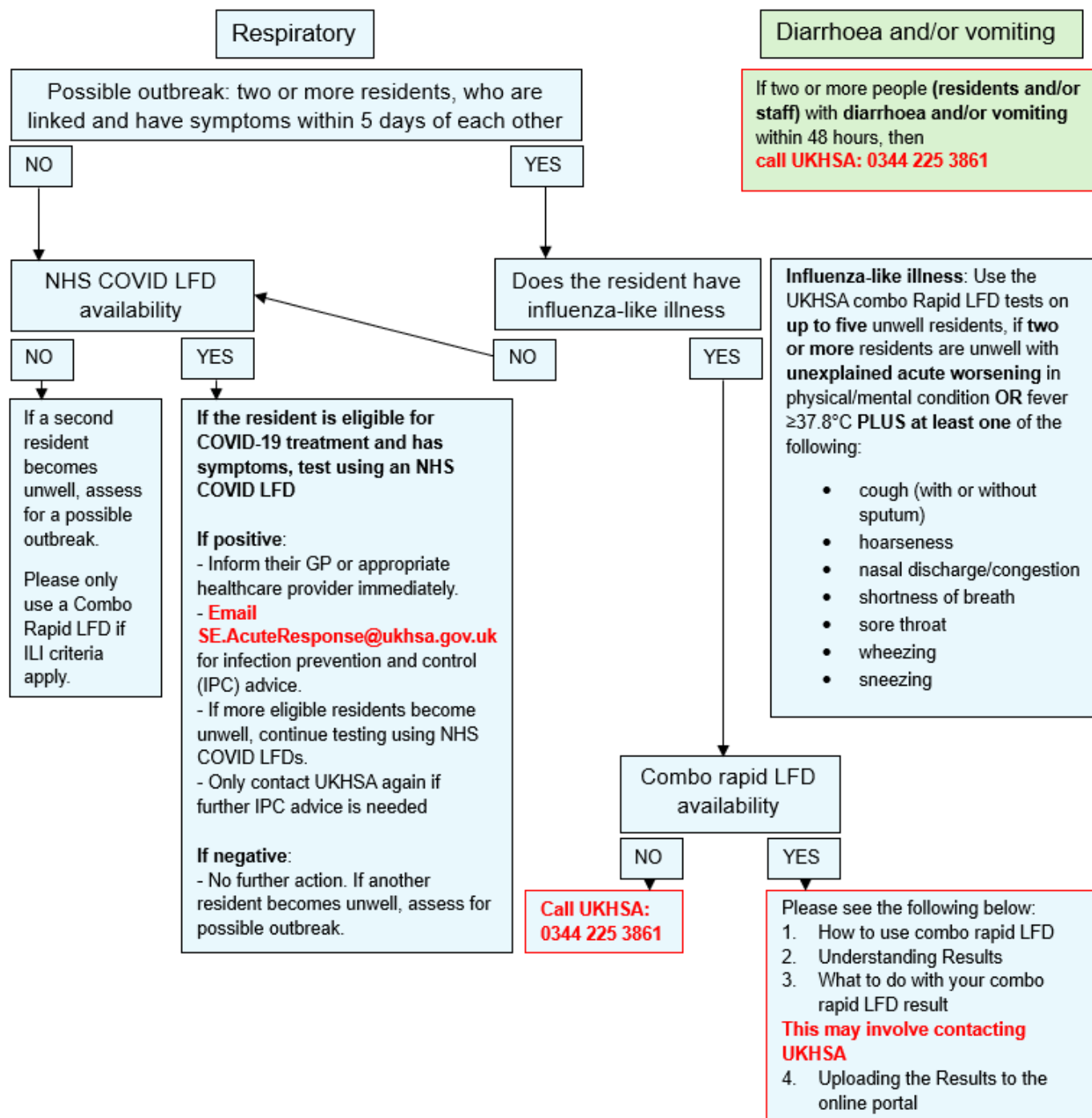
From September until 31st December 2025, UKHSA is running an evaluation of the management of acute respiratory infection outbreaks in care homes in the South East of England . This service evaluation will check whether using combo rapid LFDs (which detect COVID, flu A, and flu B) helps residents get faster treatment and lowers the risk of others becoming unwell.

Eligible care homes will receive a pack of five combo rapid LFDs. This information pack explains how and when to use them.

Quick flowchart: When to contact UKHSA in an outbreak

What to do if a resident is unwell

If you are concerned about the health of a resident, then remember to contact their **GP or appropriate healthcare provider** for management



What to do if a staff member is unwell

Respiratory

Staff who have symptoms of **respiratory infection** and who have a **high temperature** or **do not feel well enough** to go to work are advised to stay away from work and try to avoid contact with other people.

They should not use the combo Rapid LFD

Return: They should not return to work until they no longer have a high temperature (if they had one) or until they no longer feel unwell

Diarrhoea and/or vomiting

Any member of staff who has **diarrhoea and/or vomiting** should be **sent home immediately**.

Return: They should not return to the care home until **48 hours after** normal bowel habits have returned and any vomiting has stopped.

What to do if a resident is unwell

If you are concerned about the health of a resident, then remember to contact their **GP or appropriate healthcare provider** for management.

If the resident is **eligible for COVID-19 treatment** and has symptoms then test using an **NHS COVID LFD**.

If **positive**:

- Inform their **GP or appropriate healthcare provider** immediately.
- Email **SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk** for infection prevention and control (IPC) advice.
- If **more residents** (who are eligible for treatment) become unwell, continue testing using NHS COVID LFDs.
- **Do not contact UKHSA** again for these additional cases unless IPC advice is needed.

If **two or more residents** are unwell with respiratory symptoms and **do not have access to NHS COVID LFDs**, follow the [IPC in adult social care guidance](#) and follow the [When to contact your local Health Protection Team \(HPT\) section](#) for when to use the Combo Rapid LFDs.

When to contact your local Health Protection Team (HPT)

For diarrhoea and/or vomiting outbreaks

If two or more people (**residents and/or staff**) with **diarrhoea and/or vomiting** within 48 hours then call UKHSA: **0344 225 3861**

For respiratory outbreaks

If two or more **residents** are unwell:

Unexplained acute worsening in their physical or mental condition, **or**

A fever of at least 37.8C AND at least one of the following respiratory symptoms:

- cough (with or without sputum),
- hoarseness,
- nasal discharge or congestion,
- shortness of breath,
- sore throat,
- wheezing,
- sneezing

Then use the UKHSA Combo Rapid LFD tests on up to five unwell residents and follow the instructions below.

If you do not have any UKHSA Combo Rapid LFDs then call UKHSA: **0344 225 3861**

How to use and report the Combo Rapid LFD results

How to take the test:

Use the LFDs on at least two and up to five symptomatic residents

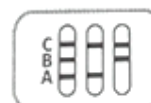
- Step 1 Inside, you'll find a **swab** (like a soft cotton bud), a small **tube with liquid**, and a **test strip** that looks like a mini plastic stick. Take the swab out—don't touch the soft tip.
- Step 2 Gently put the soft tip **just inside one nostril** (a couple of centimetres). Turn it around **5 times** in that nostril. Do the **same** in the other nostril.
- Step 3 Put the swab into the little tube with the liquid. Swirl it around for about **10 seconds** to mix it well.
- Step 4 Take the swab out and throw it away.
- Step 5 Put **3 drops** of the liquid from the tube onto **each of the small circles** on the test strip.
- Step 6 Wait for **10 minutes**. Lines will appear on the test strip.



Understanding the results:

1. The test is valid only if there is a line next to **C** (control)
2. If you see a line next to **A** or **B** this means **flu positive**.
3. A line next to **T** means **COVID-19 positive**. Seek clinical advice if treatment might be needed.
4. A line next to **A** or **B**, and **T**, means **Flu + COVID-19 positive**.

Influenza A+B:

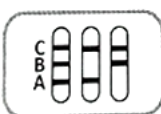
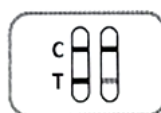
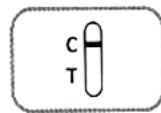
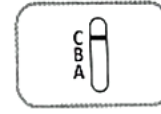


SARS-CoV-2:



What to do with your Combo Rapid LFD test results:

⚠ Remember to also register the results of the UKHSA LFDs (including void or negative results) using the [online portal](#) to request more LFDs

LFD Result	Action
Flu positive 	Call UKHSA: 0344 225 3861
COVID positive 	Contact healthcare provider for COVID treatment if eligible, AND For IPC advice email UKHSA: SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk
Flu + COVID positive <i>(As seen in both of the above)</i>	Contact healthcare provider for COVID treatment if eligible, AND Call UKHSA: 0344 225 3861
Negative  	For IPC advice email UKHSA: SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk
Note: Please use the same phone number out of hours (Mon-Fri 5pm-9am, Saturday and Sunday, and Bank Holidays).	

Uploading the result to the online portal

In order to report on the online portal:

All the information on how to record your results, including spreadsheet and where to upload results can be found at the following website –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/combined-covid-19-and-flu-tests-use-in-ari-outbreaks-in-adult-social-care-homes-in-south-east-england>



Have the following ready:

- Date and time the test was taken (record this in line with your data protection policies)
- Latest Combo Rapid test spreadsheet [\[LINK\]](#)
 - Always download the latest version
 - Do not add any sheets, rows, or columns
 - Save using the format:
CQCID_DDMMYYYY (e.g. 1-12345678910_04082025)
- Enter the name of the care home – the CQC ID, address, and postcode should automatically be filled in, please check that these details are correct
- For each tested resident:
 - Full name
 - Date of birth
 - Sex
 - Ethnic group (optional)
 - NHS number (if known)
 - Date symptoms started
 - Test results: COVID-19, Flu A, Flu B (Result options: Positive, Negative, Void)

Step-by-Step: Reporting Test Results

1. Fill in the spreadsheet

- Enter details directly (do not copy and paste)
- Use drop-downs where available
- Ensure all mandatory fields are completed
- Check the status column to confirm it's ready to upload

2. Save the file using the correct naming format

CQCID_DDMMYYYY (e.g. 1-12345678910_04082025)

3. Upload to Egress Workspace Account

- Go to the reporting link: [\[LINK\]](#)
- Enter your email address, click 'Verify'
- Enter the verification code you receive
- On the next page, click 'Select Files'
- Choose your completed spreadsheet
- Click 'Upload files'

Once uploaded, five more Combo Rapid tests will be sent to your care home (delivery will take about a week).

Troubleshooting Tips

Issues completing the spreadsheet?

- Do not copy and paste data — enter it manually
- UK mobile numbers must be 11 digits starting with 07, press 'Enter' after typing
- Use dropdown menus where available
- Ensure:
 - The spreadsheet is fully complete
 - It is saved in .xlsx format
 - No additional sheets, rows or columns have been added

Issues uploading the spreadsheet?

- Check the file is named correctly (e.g. 1-12345678910_04082025)
- The Egress upload link must be used each time you report test results
- Avoid pressing the space bar after typing your email or code
- Avoid copy-pasting into the email/code boxes — type them manually

Preparation checklists

Care Home Vaccination Checklist

Section	Checklist Item	Date Completed	Completed By
COVID-19: Vaccination & Testing	Ensure the care home GP (or alternative provider) offers COVID-19 vaccination to all eligible residents, available from 1 st October 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults aged 75 and over Residents in care homes for older adults Individuals who are immunosuppressed (aged 6 months and over) 		
	Note: Frontline health and social care workers (HSCWs) and care home staff will not routinely be eligible for COVID-19 vaccination under the autumn 2025 national programme.		
	Ensure a supply of NHS COVID-19 LFD test kits is available to test residents eligible for COVID-19 treatment, if they become unwell. Kits are available from participating pharmacies.		
Flu: Vaccination for Residents and Staff	Ensure the care home GP (or alternative provider) offers flu vaccination to all eligible residents and encourage frontline staff (including agency workers), available from 1 st October 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People aged 65 and over Adults aged 18–64 in clinical risk groups Residents in long-stay care homes Frontline workers in social care settings 		
	Advise any pregnant staff that they are eligible for the seasonal flu vaccine (available from 1 st September 2025).		
RSV: Vaccination for Residents and Staff	Advise any staff who are 28 weeks pregnant or more that they are eligible for the RSV vaccine (arranged via their GP).		

Infection-readiness information for care homes in South East England 2025/26

	Ensure RSV vaccination is offered to residents aged 75 and over who have not been previously vaccinated. (This is a one-time vaccine.)		
Pneumococcal: Vaccination for Residents and Staff	Ensure pneumococcal vaccination is offered to residents aged 65 and over who have not been previously vaccinated. This is usually a one-time vaccine although some people at higher risk may require extra doses.		
	Advise members of staff aged 65 and over or those at higher risk of getting seriously ill at any age that they are also eligible for this vaccine and should discuss with their healthcare provider. This is usually a one-time vaccine although some people at higher risk may require extra doses.		

✓ **Care Home Checklist: Planning for Norovirus (Winter Vomiting Bug)**

Section	Checklist Item	Date Completed	Completed By
Infection Control Precautions	Ensure infection control policies are up to date, read, and followed by all staff		
	Conduct a handwashing audit and educate staff on correct handwashing technique and importance		
	Ensure liquid soap and disposable paper towels are available in all toilets, communal bathrooms, and ensuite rooms		
	Ensure PPE is available – gloves, aprons, and masks		
	Check that linen management and clinical waste systems are in place, including foot-operated bins		
	Display the Norovirus poster (attached to pack)		
	Remind staff with symptoms to stay off work until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped		
Reporting to Health Protection Team (HPT)	Ensure you know how to recognise an outbreak (2 or more cases of diarrhoea and/or vomiting within 48 hours among staff and/or residents)		
	Know how to report suspected or confirmed outbreaks to your local HPT — even if local guidelines are already known		
	Be ready to maintain records during outbreaks: prepare a staff/resident list with name, DOB, and room number to track symptoms and onset dates during any outbreak		

FAQ on UKHSA Combo Rapid LFDs

How to reorder UKHSA Combo Rapid LFDs / report results of LFDs?

Always remember to use the [online portal](#) to log that you have used the LFDs and to request further LFDs. You will then receive another pack of LFDs in the post. You also need to separately contact UKHSA SE if the test is positive for flu.

What should I do if the care home has not received the Combo Rapid LFDs?

If you have not received your Combo Rapid LFD by end of September, then please email SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk, to request your LFDs.

Please note that these tests are only available to care homes in the South East region. They are not available to other residential settings or in other regions.

What if only one resident is unwell with a respiratory infection?

Please do not use if only one resident is unwell. The Combo Rapid LFD test should only be used if there is an outbreak of two or more residents.

What to do if UKHSA Combo Rapid LFD pack has expired?

These can be placed in general waste. There is no need to inform UKHSA.

If a resident has tested positive on the UKHSA Combo Rapid LFD, do they still need to be tested by an NHS COVID LFD?

If a resident has tested positive on an UKHSA Combo Rapid LFD and they are eligible for treatment, then this would usually be sufficient for NHS providers to start treatment.

In flu season, do we still need to test before starting flu antivirals?

If you have UKHSA LFDs that have not expired, then please use these before contacting UKHSA SE.

Can these tests be used on staff?

No. Do not use the Combo Rapid UKHSA LFDs for staff illness.

Do these LFD tests need to be verified with other tests?

These tests are very accurate and do not need to be checked with any other testing.

What to do if the residents have flu-like symptoms but are negative for COVID and flu?

If residents are unwell, please continue to follow the [IPC in adult social care guidance](#). Please remember to use the [online portal](#) to request additional Combo Rapid tests, even if tests are negative.

When does this service evaluation end?

The evaluation will end when the Combo Rapid LFD kits expire – which is **31st December 2025**. If the programme is extended, we will inform you and send out new LFDs.

What happens after the service evaluation?

After this date, please call SE UKHSA to report outbreaks of respiratory infections which are flu or unknown. Please email SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk, for outbreaks that are known to be COVID. This is the same process as last year.

About UKHSA

As the nation's expert national health security agency, the UKHSA will anticipate threats to health and help build the nation's readiness, defences and health security to lead strong and sustainable global, national, regional and local partnerships designed to save lives, protect the nation from public health threats, and reduce inequalities.

UK Health Security Agency, 10 South Colonnade, London, E14 4PU
www.gov.uk/ukhsa

*Prepared and updated by UKHSA South East Health Protection Team.
September 2025*

For queries relating to this document, please contact
SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk

Further resources

Cold weather

- Action cards for health and social care: [Cold weather and health: action cards - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

COVID-19

- Guidance: [COVID-19 supplement to the infection prevention and control resource for adult social care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Information about the COVID-19 vaccination: [Coronavirus vaccine](#)
- Posters – see [Campaign Resource Centre \(dhsc.gov.uk\)](#)
- Information on eligibility and booking vaccine: [Book Covid \(nhs.uk\)](#)

Flu

- Information about the Flu vaccination: [Flu vaccination: who should have it this winter and why - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Leaflet – Flu leaflet for people with learning disability: [Flu vaccination: easy-read flu vaccination resources - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Posters – see [Campaign Resource Centre \(dhsc.gov.uk\)](#)
- Patient antiviral information template – see below. For use as directed by your HPT in the event of a flu outbreak requiring antivirals
- Information on eligibility and booking vaccine (live from 23rd Sept): [Book flu \(nhs.uk\)](#)

Norovirus

- Hand hygiene guidance: [IPC quick guide for care workers – hand hygiene](#)
- Stop norovirus spreading poster: [Stop norovirus spreading](#)

Pneumococcal disease

- Information about the pneumococcal vaccine: [Pneumococcal vaccination \(nhs.uk\)](#)

RSV (respiratory syncytial virus)

- Guidance: RSV vaccine for older adults: [Your guide to the RSV vaccine for older adults](#)

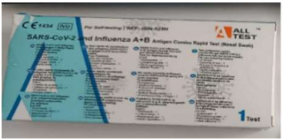

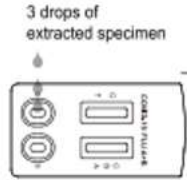


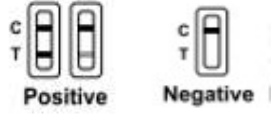

Shingles

- Information on eligibility and benefits of vaccination for adults: [Shingles vaccination for adults](#)

Visiting guidance

- Guidance to support safer visiting as per new CQC fundamental standard (Regulation 9A) on visiting in care homes: [Supporting safer visiting in care homes during infectious illness outbreaks](#)

How to use and report combo flu and COVID-19 LFD tests for flu-like outbreaks among care home residents

<p>Step 1</p> <p>You have received 5 combo LFD kits in the post. Store these with the instructions on how to use them.</p> 	<p>Step 2</p> <p>If 2 or more residents develop flu-like illness within 5 days of each other (possible outbreak), use combo LFDs (one on each ill resident up to all 5) according to pack instructions.</p> 	<p>Step 3</p> <p>Once you have taken the nasal swab, mixed it with the fluid and added drops on the LFD (3 drops per circle above each window), wait for 10 mins for lines to appear (as per pack instructions).</p> 
<p>Step 4</p> <p>Check the test has worked. Ensure each window has a control line showing (line next to C). If not, (like below) the test did not work. If it did not work repeat with a new LFD.</p> 	<p>Step 5</p> <p>Check if it is flu. If it is flu, the CBA window will show at least two lines. One C line and one A or B line or all three lines (even if a weak line). No A or B line means no flu.</p> 	<p>Step 6</p> <p>Check if its COVID. If it is COVID there will be at least two lines in the CT window. No T line means no COVID.</p> 
<p>Step 7</p> <p>If two or more residents have flu, call the local Health Protection Team on 0344 225 3861 or email se.acuterresponse@ukhsa.gov.uk</p> <p>A member of the team will advise on any actions needed to further protect residents and staff and ensure the unwell residents receive the correct medicines.</p> <p>If only one person has flu (no outbreak)– contact the GP.</p>	<p>Step 8</p> <p>If any residents are ill with COVID only, seek clinical advice if the resident is eligible for treatment. Information on eligibility can be found here: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19/treatments-for-covid-19/</p> <p>You do not need to report COVID results to the Health Protection Team, only positive flu results.</p> <p>If residents have flu-like illness and do not have flu or COVID, contact the GP.</p>	<p>Step 9</p> <p>Report all results (COVID & FLU) online (positive, negative and those that did not work) on this webpage: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/combined-covid-19-and-flu-tests-use-in-ari-outbreaks-in-adult-social-care-homes-in-south-east-england</p>  <p>Please note that you are legally required to report the test results. This will also let the suppliers know that the LFDs have been used and they will send new ones to your care home. The Health Protection Team or GP cannot order more LFD tests for your care home.</p>

Influenza in care homes patient information template

This form can be used to gather the necessary information to support clinicians in prescribing antivirals in the context of an influenza outbreak. It should be completed by the care home when antivirals are recommended by UKHSA and should include all residents that have been recommended to receive antivirals for treatment (cases) or prophylaxis (contacts). Please leave blank any information that is unavailable.

Care home name

Name of person completing the form

Name	DOB	NHS number	Height	Weight	Renal function (GFR)	Any swallow issues?	Medical history (specifically diabetes, cardiac disease, respiratory disease, neurological condition, severe immunosuppression, BMI ≥40)	Allergies	Are they a case or a contact?*
									If a case, include date that symptoms started

**This information will inform the decision of whether the patient should receive 'treatment dose' antivirals as recommended for cases of flu, or 'prophylactic dose' antivirals recommended for contacts. If unsure, include details of current symptoms.*

Continue onto additional pages as needed.

CARE

NHS



STAY STRONG.

GET VACCINATED.

**Get your flu vaccination now to
protect yourself, your patients and
your colleagues from serious illness.**

Last winter, around 8,000 people in England died from flu, while flu vaccination prevented an estimated 96,000 to 120,200 hospitalisations. If you've been vaccinated, you're less likely to catch or spread flu, reducing the risk of passing it to your family and friends, your colleagues and your vulnerable patients.

- **Your professional duty:** Patients with chronic conditions, immunocompromised individuals and older people are at the highest risk from flu and depend on you to help keep them safe. Getting vaccinated protects everyone who trusts you with their care and upholds the professional standards our communities expect.
- **Supporting colleagues when they need you most:** Even healthy people can get flu – and it's not just a cold. Flu can be serious and debilitating at any age. Getting vaccinated protects you and your team during the busiest months of the year, helping maintain staffing levels and reducing the impact of unplanned absences on you and your colleagues.
- **How to get vaccinated:** Your Trust offers multiple convenient options to get vaccinated based around your working and shift patterns. Look out for Trust communications on this. Vaccination doesn't take long and provides protection in two weeks. Don't wait for reminders – book early.
- **Is it safe?** The flu vaccine has decades of proven safety and effectiveness. While some experience mild side effects – such as fatigue or soreness at the injection site – these are much less disruptive than flu itself, which can leave you feeling very unwell. Annual vaccination is essential because flu strains can change yearly.

Arrange your vaccination now. Your vaccination protects patients, supports colleagues, and maintains the services our communities depend on.

Look out for Trust communications or for more information on flu vaccination visit the national website: www.nhs.uk/wintervaccinations

Best Practice: How to hand wash step by step images

Steps 3-8 should take at least 15 seconds.





UK Health
Security
Agency

Stop norovirus spreading

Norovirus, also known as the 'winter vomiting bug', is the most common stomach bug in the UK. It can spread easily through close contact, or by contaminated surfaces, food or water.

The main symptoms of norovirus include a sudden onset of nausea, followed by projectile vomiting and diarrhoea, usually 1 to 2 days after becoming infected. Other common symptoms include a high fever, a headache and aching arms and legs.

Good hand hygiene is important to stop norovirus spreading.

To stop norovirus spreading, you should:

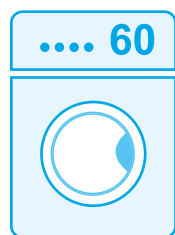
- wash your hands thoroughly using soap and warm water after using the toilet or contact with a sick individual and before preparing and eating food.
- stay off school or work until you have not been sick or had diarrhoea for at least two days
- not rely on alcohol gels instead of washing your hands, as these do not kill the virus
- wash any contaminated clothing or bedding using detergent at 60°C using disposable gloves to handle any items
- use bleach-based cleaners to disinfect surfaces

If you catch it, stay home for 48 hours after your symptoms clear

DO



Wash clothes and bedding at 60°C



Wash hands with soap, clean surfaces with bleach-based disinfectants



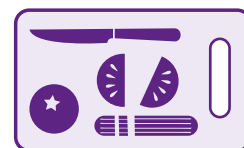
DON'T



Go to work or school, visit care homes or hospitals



Prepare food for others



Most people will make a full recovery in 2-3 days without needing any medicine. It is important to keep hydrated – especially children and the elderly.

Try not to visit A&E or GP surgeries if you have symptoms of norovirus unless advised to do so by a healthcare professional, as this may spread the bug to others. Call ahead to a GP or ring NHS 111 if you are worried about your symptoms.

Further information is available at NHS 111 or NHS.uk (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus/>)