**Antibody Testing – General Information and Frequently Asked Questions**

**What does an antibody test do and how does it differ to a virus test?**

*Antibody test:* Antibody tests are used to detect antibodies to the virus as a marker of past infection. The test works by taking a blood sample and testing that sample for the presence of antibodies.

A positive test result indicates that you have previously had the virus and have developed some form of immune response.

However, we do not yet know how long the antibody response lasts, so we don’t know how long it might help your body resist the virus. And we don’t know whether having antibodies means one cannot transmit the virus to others.

*PCR test/virus test:* In contrast, a PCR test aims to find out if you currently have the virus. A positive result does not necessarily indicate that you will go on to develop antibodies to the virus and an immune response. It is possible that around 10% of people who test positive will not develop an immune response.

**What do antibody test results mean?**

A positive antibody test demonstrates that someone has developed antibodies to the virus. The presence of antibodies signals that the body has staged an immune response to the virus. 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, nor whether having antibodies means a person cannot transmit the virus to others.

Our understanding of the virus will grow as new scientific evidence and studies emerge. An antibody test result can only tell an individual whether or not they have had the virus in the past. Antibody tests are also being used currently in surveillance studies, to understand what proportion of the population have already had the virus.

**Will the results of the antibody test mean changes to the PPE guidance?**

No, if someone tests positive, they still need to follow social distancing measures and appropriate use of PPE. A positive test result for antibodies, whichever test is used, does not currently mean that the person being tested is immune to Covid-19. There is also no firm evidence that the presence of antibodies means someone cannot be re-infected with the virus or will not pass it on to someone else.

**If you test positive for antibodies, can you ignore lockdown restrictions?**

No. There is no evidence yet to suggest that those who have been proven to have had the virus are immune. This is the position of the World Health Organisation.

You should continue to comply with social distancing measures and government guidelines. All infection prevention and control measures must continue to be in place irrespective of the presence of antibodies.

**Once I’ve had my blood test, am I able to stop the process or have the results removed from my health records?**

Having the test is not mandatory. In the same way other diagnostic results are displayed in your records, you will not be able to have your results removed or stop the process once your bloods have been taken.

 **Is the test mandatory?**

No, this is not a mandatory test.

**How can I find out my NHS number for the request form?**

Your NHS number can be found on appointment letters, online GP records (if your GP has online services), or a prescription or hospital discharge letter. This is needed to be able to register you for the test. The test administration team can look up your NHS number when registering you for your appointment.

**Can I have the test if I feel unwell or have symptoms?**

Antibodies are not detected on testing for approximately 14 days post-exposure. Therefore, you must wait 14 days after feeling symptomatic, or having any mild illness before having the test taken. Please note that this includes if you have felt unwell but continued to be at work. Do not worry about missing an opportunity to have a test if you have been unwell, testing will continue into the future.

**If my test result says I have antibodies, do I have immunity to Covid-19?**

There is no evidence yet to suggest that those who have been proven to have had the virus are immune. This means you should continue to comply with social distancing measures and government guidelines. All infection prevention and control measures, including full PPE compliance must continue to be in place irrespective of the presence of antibodies.

**Will my results be shared?**

All results will be shared with Public Health England (PHE) who are collating the results of antibody testing for the purposes of establishing population prevalence. This data may be used to guide national policy on lockdown measures. We are obliged to share results pertaining to notifiable infectious diseases under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010.