

## **SYMPTOM FREE TESTING TO CONTINUE AS RESTRICTIONS EASE**

The symptom free testing programme across Kent will remain in place until at least the end of June 2021 as a vital part of the restrictions easing across the county.

Around one in three people who have COVID-19 have no symptoms and will be spreading the virus without realising it. Rapid testing detects cases quickly, meaning positive cases can isolate immediately and we can break the chain of transmission.

The symptom free tests sites in Kent have now carried out more than 420,000 tests and identified over 2500 positive cases.

Kent's Director for Public Health, Andrew Scott-Clark has also advised that, from next week, everyone who lives and works in Kent should be tested for COVID-19 twice a week.

"Combined with the other guidelines that we all continue to follow, rapid testing is a vital tool to continue to reduce infection rates and, most importantly, to ensure that they stay low," said Andrew Scott-Clark.

"From Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March we want people to take a lateral flow test twice a week, particularly those people who have to leave home to work. A one-off test is of limited benefit as it can only provide information about the likelihood of being infectious at that point in time. Twice-weekly testing will give us more accurate results and help us to continue to drive down case rates down in Kent and save lives.

"COVID-19 is still a very real threat and I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is that everyone who is eligible is tested regularly to minimise the spread of the virus, especially as the national restrictions are gradually eased from 29<sup>th</sup> March. Let's keep Kent going and reduce the impact of this deadly virus by working together to keep each other safe."

Over the coming weeks there will be some changes to the sites and operating hours, so KCC is urging people to check all details carefully before booking a symptom free test.

- **Sites at Detling, Kemsley and Fairfield will be closing on 30<sup>th</sup> March.**
- **From 31<sup>st</sup> March the testing centres at Sheerness and Swanscombe will be extending their hours to between 9am and 7pm.**
- **All sites will be closed on Good Friday, Easter Day and Easter Monday but will be open on Easter Saturday.**
- **As explained above, the Director for Public Health has recommended a change in the frequency of testing. From 15<sup>th</sup> March residents who live or work in Kent should take a symptom free test twice a week.**

If you are experiencing any of the COVID-19 symptoms – high temperature, a new or continuous cough, a loss or change in taste or smell – you should NOT visit a symptom free testing site and continue to self-isolate. You can book a test by visiting the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119.

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