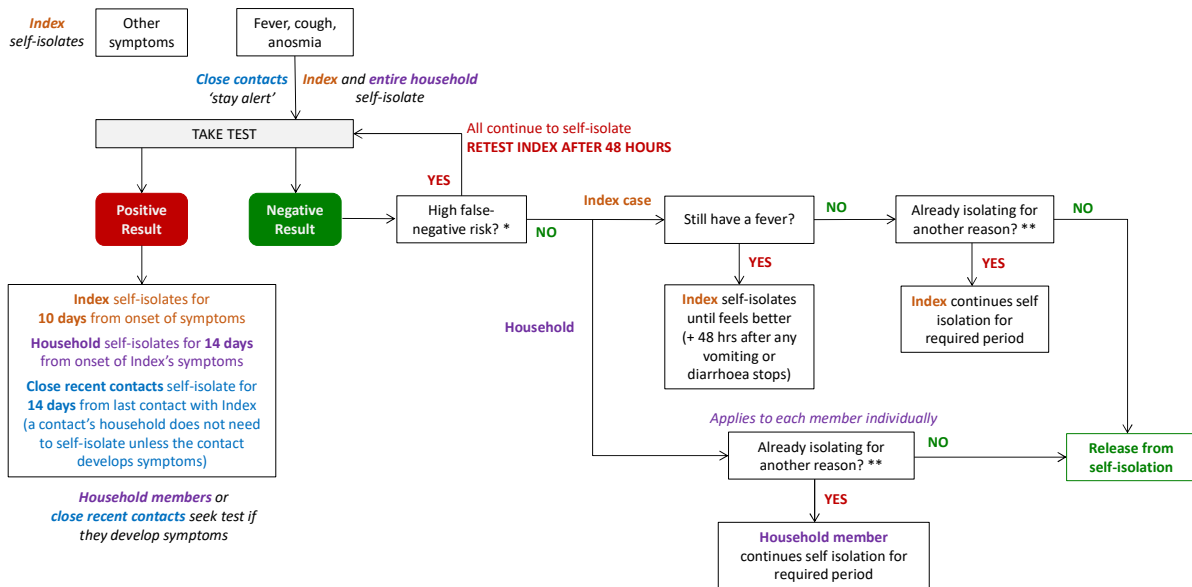


GUIDANCE ON NEED TO SELF-ISOLATE

1. SUMMARY FLOWCHART



* False negative results are common if a test is taken within 5 days of exposure to a known case (i.e. early in the incubation period)

** See section 3 below

2. AWAITING THE TEST RESULT

From the time of booking a test until the time the result is received, usually less than 24 hours, the individual (“index” in the above diagram) and their household must self-isolate if they have any one of the three symptoms of Covid19 which would trigger NHS testing – they believe they have a fever, a persistent new cough, or a loss of taste/smell.

If the individual does not have one of these three trigger symptoms, only they (not their household) needs to self-isolate while awaiting the test result.

3. AFTER A NEGATIVE TEST RESULT

The individual and their household no longer needs to self-isolate except in three circumstances:

1. The individual continues to have a high fever – in which case the individual, but not household, must continue to self-isolate until they are better (if they have diarrhoea or vomiting, they must self-isolate for 48 hours after these symptoms have subsided).
2. The individual has been instructed to self-isolate by Public Health England because they are a known contact of a proven case or a household contact of someone awaiting the results of Covid19 testing – in which case they must continue to do so until the end of the instructed period. (If their exposure to the proven case was less than 5 days before the test, they will be advised by EAS to book a repeat test because of the risk of a false negative result.)
3. The individual is in self-isolation because of government quarantine requirements on arrival from overseas – in which case they must continue to do so until the end of the instructed period. A negative test does not release them from these quarantine requirements as they could still be incubating the virus.

4. AFTER A POSITIVE TEST RESULT

Both the individual and their household need to self-isolate. The individual has to self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms (or the date of the test if they were asymptomatic). If they are still unwell at the end of 10 days, they should continue to isolate until recovered. The household needs to isolate for longer - 14 days starts from the same start date as the index case. Full details can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/>

If contacts of an individual who has tested positive are not living in the same household, they need to self-isolate only if they meet the Public Health England (PHE) criteria of close contact:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/>

PHE advice to close contacts is to “try to avoid contact with anyone you live with as far as possible”, however household members are not required to self-isolate if the close-contact has no symptoms.

5. INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS

In some cases, individual circumstances may not easily fit the above guidance and it will be necessary for Colleges and Departments to use their judgement in applying the guidance. For example, it may not be necessary for a household contact to self-isolate if they have been away from College in the period immediately before the test result (i.e. it would be reasonable to decide that there is little risk to them or others if their last contact with the index case was more than 48 hours before the onset of symptoms). Rigid application of guidance without consideration of individual circumstance and actual transmission risk is likely to undermine communal efforts to contain the Covid19 virus.

Although we would therefore strongly encourage Colleges and Departments to make their own judgements, if they do feel they need further information or advice they can find this either by contacting the University Health Advisory Group or, in the case of an outbreak, seeking advice directly from the local PHE team involved in contact tracing.

Finally, there is concern that strict adherence to NHS/PHE guidance could lead to prolonged self-isolation of a household (because individuals develop symptoms or test positive sequentially). However, our understanding is that household contacts who test positive within the 14 day isolation period will not trigger an extension; prolonged household quarantine beyond 14 days would only be necessary if a household member tested positive after the initial isolation period.