

UK launches antibody surveillance program to analyze COVID-19 infection/vaccination

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UK Health Security Agency to launch UK-wide antibody surveillance programme for the general public for the first time

Home antibody tests available for up to 8,000 people a day across the UK who opt in to the service through NHS Test and Trace

Data will improve understanding of the protection provided by antibodies generated following COVID-19 infection and vaccination.

Thousands of adults a day will be given free access to antibody tests through a new national surveillance programme launched by the UK Health Security Agency next week, to help improve our understanding of immunity against COVID-19 from vaccination and infection.

For the first time, the programme will offer antibody testing to adults in the UK who test positive. From Tuesday, anyone aged over 18 will be able to opt in to take part when booking a PCR test through NHS Test and Trace. Up to 8,000 people who opt-in and then receive a positive PCR result will be sent 2 finger prick antibody tests to complete at home and send back to a lab for analysis.

The UK Health Security Agency will work alongside NHS Test and Trace testing services in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to monitor levels of antibodies in positive cases across the UK. The data collected will help estimate the proportion of those who got COVID-19 despite developing antibodies as a result of having a vaccine or previously catching coronavirus.

The initiative could also provide insight into any groups of people who do not develop an immune response. The UK Health Security Agency will use the data to inform our ongoing approach to COVID-19 and provide further insight into the effectiveness of the vaccines against different variants.