

## Recommendations on COVID testing for renal patients during periods of low prevalence

The prevalence of COVID-19 in the community has fallen and remains at a relatively low level. Most patients receiving haemodialysis are well protected by vaccination although a small proportion do not have detectable COVID antibodies.

The UK Health Security Agency has set out new guidance on [COVID testing in periods of low prevalence](#), stating that routine asymptomatic testing will be paused in most settings from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.

NHS England issued a [letter to NHS trusts and Integrated Care Boards](#) on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2022 providing further guidance on scenarios where testing in the NHS should continue, including elective and emergency care of immunocompromised individuals. It advises that local discretion may be applied to continue asymptomatic testing of patients who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 as well as the staff caring for them.

Patients receiving haemodialysis and most renal inpatients are moderately or severely immunocompromised.

### A COVID-19 test should be performed in the following groups:

- Symptomatic inpatients (PCR)
- Symptomatic immunocompromised renal patients at home who qualify for COVID-19 treatments (LFD)
- Transfer of renal inpatients within or between hospitals (PCR)
- Asymptomatic renal patients attending for elective care (LFD)
- Outbreak testing (PCR or LFD according to local protocol)
- Symptomatic staff (LFD at home)
- Asymptomatic staff caring for renal inpatients and dialysis patients (LFD twice weekly)

### We recommend the following actions to assess whether COVID testing of asymptomatic patients is advisable in your haemodialysis unit:

1. Review local community COVID-19 prevalence and trends
2. Perform [haemodialysis COVID risk assessment](#)
3. If risks are not well controlled or there has been an outbreak within the last 3 months, consider weekly asymptomatic testing by PCR or lateral flow test.
4. Discuss with your local infection control team
5. In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19, obtain advice from your local infection control team including asymptomatic testing of patients and staff until outbreak has resolved and local infection rates remain low.