



Dear Visitor,

Rushymead's visiting policy will always adapt to the changing conditions concerning the spread of Covid-19 and the associated Government policies and guidance. The current policy reflects Government guidance that took effect on 17th May 2021.

Rushymead understands that any long-term continuation of these arrangements will depend on how well the pandemic is being brought under control and the success of the vaccination programme.

As lockdown easing continues, we are pleased to announce that each of our residents is now able to nominate up to 5 people to visit, although no more than two visitors are permitted at any one time. Babies and children under 11 do not count towards this limit, however national restrictions on indoor gatherings must be adhered to. This is to allow care homes to ensure that visiting arrangements can be conducted safely and in line with current infection control guidance.

We encourage the family members who are currently not able to be nominated, to use the available alternative means of communication; telephone, social media, Facetime, Skype and Zoom. These methods are well established at Rushymead and will continue as options even after the lifting of the current visiting restrictions.



We know how important it is to both residents and their family to see each other and with your help, we want to support this as much as we can, but it is also our duty to protect your loved ones from any unnecessary risk.

To enable as many of our residents to see their loved ones, Rushymead will continue to operate a booking system and restrict each visit to half an hour; so please contact us to make an appointment.

Before making any visit to Rushymead, please familiarise yourself with our visiting guidelines below.

Friends and relatives have a very important role and responsibility to help Rushymead keep their loved ones safe. Please think of yourself as part of a team with Rushymead staff. By carefully following the steps described below you will be playing your part in helping to protect not just your loved one, but all the people with whom they share their home, from the risk of infection.

We ask for your understanding because it will be very challenging to organise these visits for all our residents as frequently as you may wish. Rushymead must follow a strict booking, testing and cleaning regime.

Preparing for your visit

To keep your loved one and Rushymead safe, we ask that you please follow the guidelines below:

- stay home if you're feeling unwell, including if you have a fever, a cough or a change in your sense of taste and smell
- follow national guidance outside of your visit, including limiting your contact with other people and wearing a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet



- observe social distancing with anyone outside of your household or bubble and wash your hands regularly.

On the day of your visit

You'll be asked to take a test using a lateral flow device (LFD) which works like the commonly known lateral flow rapid test strip used in pregnancy tests. It is a simple to use diagnostic device used in people who do not have COVID-19 symptoms but have lots of the virus and therefore infectious on the day.

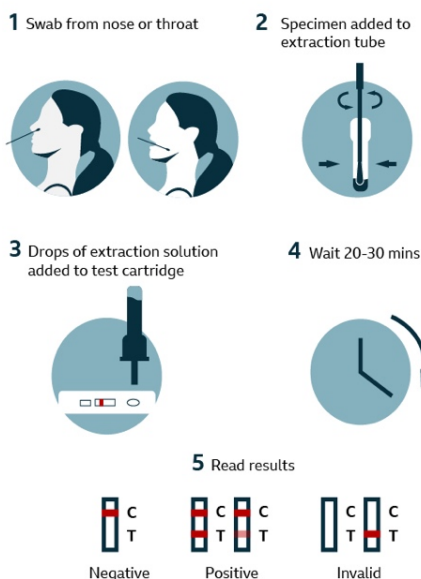
So, it is a spot check test that detects a COVID-19 antigen (toxin or other foreign substance which induces an immune response in the body) which is produced when a person is infected with COVID-19.



Image courtesy of bbc.co.uk

If the antigen is present, a coloured strip on the LFD will appear to show a positive result. See image below.

How the rapid tests work



Source: Innova Medical Group



This means the LFD test is not good at finding the virus in people who are early in the infection and therefore not infectious yet. Thus, it does not mean that you are free of the virus after showing a negative reading with

an LFD and you do not have to test to check again. Only the PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test is able to find very small amounts of the virus, especially early in infection. This is because it works in a different way as the swab kits go to a lab as opposed to being tested on site. The PCR test is also used primarily in people who have symptoms and can be booked through the [NHS website](#).



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With this in mind, just because one has a negative result after the LFD test, it does not mean one may choose not to use PPE (personal protective equipment) or the established protocols of the day.

Key steps during the test

When you first enter Rushymead

- a staff member will check you in for your visit and provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and support you with putting it on. This will include gloves, mask and apron.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form that you agree to taking the test and sharing your result. We may also ask that you share personal details including your date of birth, ethnicity, and contact details to support you with registering your test result. Registering your test result is important because it links you to your individual test kit
- a staff member will provide you with 3 copies of your test kit barcode. One copy is for a staff member to put on your lateral flow device, and the others are copies. These barcodes will track your individual test to you. Make sure to keep these copies with you throughout the rest of the testing process

Taking your test

1. after you check in for your test, a member of staff will direct you to move to the testing area you will hand one copy of your barcode to the member of staff supporting your testing process
2. a member of staff will hand you a packaged swab (looks like a very long cotton bud)
3. you will then need to take your own throat and nose swab, supervised by a member of staff. They will talk you through how to swab yourself which will only take about 30 seconds to do.
4. you can ask a staff member to perform the swab test on you, if you prefer.
5. once you have handed over the swab, you will be asked to wait in a designated area until your result is ready. This will take approximately 30 minutes.

Receiving your result

1. after 30 minutes, a staff member will tell you your result
2. once you have received your result, you will need to register your test kit online with your own mobile device. If you are not able to register your own result, a member of staff will do so, but they'll need to take down your personal details.

Understanding your test result

Rushymead staff will process your test and give you a result within 30 minutes. This result will also be reported to the wider NHS Test and Trace program.

The result will affect whether you can complete your visit in the following ways:

- **Positive** – you will not be able to visit. You will have to take a second test, which is a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test that Rushymead will provide for you. You will have to take the test and register it on site, then go home immediately and self-isolate until you receive your result. NHS Test and Trace will text, email, or call you with your result in around 72 hours. If you test positive, NHS Test and Trace may contact you to ask you for your close contacts.



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- **Negative** – your visit will be able to go ahead, as long as you comply with all other IPC measures (see below). It is possible that you may still have COVID-19, so we will need to make sure you wear PPE at all times and ensure that the visit takes place in a safe way. If you have any questions about this, please ask me, Bev, the Rushymead manager, or staff for advice.

During your visit

It is important to recognise that a negative test will provide us with some assurance that at best, you are not carrying the virus and at worst you are not contagious. However, the test is not a complete guarantee. To keep your loved one and the care home safe, we ask that you please follow Rushymead's guidelines on its hygiene & infection control measures.

Please make sure:

- you keep your PPE on at all times
- you only go to the part of Rushymead that is permitted for your visit
- you follow carefully any guidance and instructions provided by care home staff
- you follow instructions for putting on PPE
- Perform hand hygiene using soap and water or alcohol hand gel
- Put on a surgical face mask.

All visitors share an important role to play – helping to keep their loved ones, other residents and staff safe by carefully following our visiting policy guidance.

If at any time visitors break the visiting protocol, they may be asked to leave, and a meeting arranged with management.

Closure of Rushymead to visitors

In the face of new variants of the virus and a potential upsurge in current prevalent types of COVID-19, we need to remain alert to risks ensuring we protect those most at risk in Rushymead while ensuring indoor visits can go ahead.



In certain circumstances Rushymead management reserves the right to close to all visitors as we have always done in the interest of safeguarding residents; particularly if there are new cases of COVID-19 or similar variants or evidence of increased risk from community transmission that has been identified by local Public Health England.

At the discretion of management, Rushymead may close for other infectious illnesses as during any pandemic, disaster or major event. As we begin to look forward to returning to our normal lifestyles and socially interact with other households and the wider community, there is an increased risk of an infectious outbreak such as:

- Diarrhoea & or vomiting (Gastroenteritis)
- Norovirus
- Clostridioides Difficile (C-Diff)
- Respiratory outbreak such as flu or chest infections

If you have any further questions or queries about visiting loved ones at your care home, please contact me.

Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation. We will continue to work hard to support and improve meaningful visits with our residents.

Have a wonderful visit!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bev Sturges".



Bev Sturges
Care Home Manager
bev.sturges@rushymead.co.uk
01494 727738