

Testing for Measles in Primary Care



Testing Protocols for Suspected Cases

1

Telephone Triage / Consultation

If a patient is suspected of measles during telephone triage, notify HPT without delay and advise the patient to isolate. HPT will assess the situation and provide advice regarding testing, which may include self-testing at home or later attendance at the GP surgery.

Health Protection Team (HPT).

0300 303 8162

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If HPT advises attendance to GP surgery for testing, follow guidance for 'In-Person Review' >

2

In-Person Review

For cases requiring a face-to-face appointment, ensure the use of an isolation room. If appropriate, patients should be seen at the end of the day or clinic session.

If measles is suspected, take a sample using a viral swab (see below).

Transmission-based precautions, including the use of fit tested FFP3 masks, should be initiated.

 www.england.nhs.uk

[NHS England » Chapter 2: Transmission ...](#)

Sample Requirements and Handling

For patients with suspected measles infection, a viral swab is required.

Note: any viral swab may be used for measles PCR testing, including a dry swab. A bacterial swab cannot be used as these contain PCR inhibitors



Before using a swab, double-check the expiry date.

Collect a viral swab from the **throat or mouth**. A mouth swab should be collected by rubbing the swab along the gum line and then over the tongue.

Provide relevant clinical details, date of onset, exposure to other suspected cases, and vaccination history and date for accurate testing.

Oral fluid testing kits are not recommended for diagnostic purposes but may be used for surveillance or contact tracing as advised by HPT.

Storage, Transport, and Urgent Testing

Store samples at room temperature.

Transport depends on the severity and urgency of the case. Urgent testing is indicated for vulnerable individuals, such as infants, pregnant individuals, and the immunocompromised, who may require immunoglobulin therapy within a 72hr period.

Urgent samples may also be required to identify vulnerable contacts such as unvaccinated children, healthcare workers, and pregnant individuals who may need to be excluded for extended periods.

HPT will advise on the requirement for urgent testing and will organise a courier for such cases. All non-urgent samples can be transported as per normal to the local lab.