



National Endoscopy Programme Position Statement: Pre-Procedure COVID Testing

This document provides the National Endoscopy Programme's (NEP) position regarding pre-procedure COVID testing for patients.

Welsh Government advice on pre-procedure COVID testing for endoscopy patients was not available at the time of publication of the first three versions of the NEP's recovery guidance (1st May 2020, 19th June 2020 and 2nd October 2020), however new evidence has emerged and guidance reviewed as a result. The "Framework for COVID testing for hospital patients in Wales: March 2021", published by Welsh Government, considers endoscopy as part of planned care/diagnostic services as detailed in [NICE Guideline 179](#). This guidance advises patients should "have a test for SARS CoV 2 no more than 3 days before admission, and ensure the results are available beforehand".

In January 2021 the document entitled [COVID-19: Guidance for maintaining services within health and care settings](#) was developed by the Department of Health and Social Care, Public Health Wales, Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, Health Protection Scotland/National Services Scotland, Public Health England and NHS England as official guidance, details the potential for a low risk (green) pathway where testing is in place.

This pathway applies to any care facility where there are:

- a) triaged/clinically assessed individuals with no symptoms or known recent COVID-19 contact/exposure

AND

have a negative SARS-CoV-2 PCR test within 72 hours of treatment and, for planned admissions, have self-isolated for the required period or from the test date

OR

- b) Individuals who have recovered (14 days) from COVID-19 and have had at least 48 hours without fever or respiratory symptoms

OR

- c) patients or individuals are part of a regular formal NHS testing plan and remain negative and asymptomatic.

Within this guidance it is suggested that **infection, prevention and control (IP&C) measures can be reduced in a low risk (green) pathway**. The key principles of a low risk pathway are detailed on pages 24-27 of [COVID-19: Guidance for maintaining services within health and care settings](#).

It is recognised that implementing pre-procedure COVID testing poses a significant logistical challenge. The NEP is aware that some Health Boards have implemented, or are planning to implement, pre-procedure COVID testing.

Whilst it is the decision of the Health Board whether or not to implement pre-procedure COVID testing, the NEP asks that practices are monitored to ensure that the pathway is being conducted in the safest manner possible and that no patients or staff come to harm as a result of the changes. A COVID standard operating procedure (SOP) should be created which has been signed off by the Health Board's Endoscopy User Group (EUG) and Health Board Executive team.