

SIREN

SARS-CoV2 Immunity & Reinfection Evaluation

SIREN Study Participant Frequently Asked Questions

ELIGIBILITY AND ENROLMENT

1. How do I join SIREN?

Please contact your organisation's research team. They will be able to check that you are eligible, give you the patient information leaflet to read and then give you a study number and passcode to access the online enrolment consent and questionnaire.

2. How do I get the study number and passcode so that I can log on?

Please contact your organisation's research team – they can provide you with this (once they have checked you are eligible and you have read the patient information leaflet).

3. I have already had an antibody test, can I participate?

Yes – whether or not you have had an antibody test does not affect your eligibility to enrol into SIREN.

4. I have previously been tested and am antibody negative, can I still be enrolled into the SIREN study?

Yes – we are interested in enrolling both people who are antibody positive and those who are antibody negative.

5. Can I be involved in more than one research study at once?

From the perspective of participating in the SIREN study, there are no restrictions on you joining other studies. You may need to discuss your participation in SIREN with the other studies that you are involved with or plan to be involved with, as they may have eligibility criteria prevent you joining. Importantly, other studies may not want you to be informed of your antibody results over time. It is important that you inform us of your involvement in any other studies as this may affect interpretation of your test results. You will be given the opportunity to inform us of this in the enrolment and follow-up questionnaires.

6. I'm keen to join a vaccine study if it is offered to me in the future – can I join SIREN now?

We are happy for you to join other studies if you wish and it will not affect eligibility to participate in SIREN. There are however, some COVID vaccine studies that do not want their participants to be enrolled in serological studies. This is because where participants are given the results of the antibody tests this may reveal to them if have received the COVID vaccine or a placebo, which could affect the results from that participant. If you are part of SIREN it is a requirement that you are told your results, so you would not be able to be enrolled in both SIREN and this type of study. If you wanted to join the vaccine study therefore you may have to withdraw from SIREN. This is a discussion that you may need to have with that vaccine study team before enrolling in either study.

However, as we do not know the future enrolment criteria of vaccine studies we are very happy for you to enrol into SIREN and this can be a discussion area for the future.

7. Am I eligible for SIREN if I have had a COVID-19 vaccine as part of the vaccination program?

Yes – you can be enrolled in SIREN if you have received a COVID-19 vaccine. The SIREN study also aims to provide vaccine effectiveness estimates at scale. More information about your vaccination status will be requested in the follow-up questionnaires. Please check the [Vaccine FAQs](#) for further details.

8. I have completed the questionnaire but haven't received an email/text with the consent form.

This could be due to several reasons:

- You will only receive the consent form when you have submitted the whole consent and enrolment questionnaire, so please check you have clicked 'submit'.
- You may have put in the incorrect email address or phone number in, if this is the case please contact your research team and they can get in touch with us – we will look into this.
- Occasionally the survey system may be undergoing essential maintenance; in this case, we will inform your organisation as soon as we become aware of this.

If all the above processes have been explored and you have still not completed the consent form, please contact your research team directly. You should not have any samples taken as part of the SIREN study until you have completed the consent form.

9. I am trying to complete the questionnaire, but it won't let me put in the date my symptoms started – what shall I do?

This may be due to you answering about historical symptoms in the section that is asking you about "New symptoms that started in the past 2 weeks" (i.e. 2 weeks prior to you completing the enrolment questionnaire). You will have an opportunity to report older symptoms later in the survey.

If you had ongoing symptoms that began more than two weeks ago, then answer NO to the NEW SYMPTOMS section (click back to the previous page) and then move forward to the next section of the survey, which will ask about any historical COVID-19 symptoms you had since 1st January 2020. This is where you can report symptoms that have persisted (from the first onset date) and can record if these symptoms are still present now.

10. I will be moving to another organisation, can I remain in SIREN if I move?

Yes, as long as the new healthcare organisation is participating in SIREN, you can still remain involved in the study. In some cases where your new organisation isn't participating in SIREN, you may still be able to participate. Please contact your organisation's research team for more information.

TESTING

11. Do I have to have both swabs and bloods?

The results of both swabs and bloods are very important to the study findings and so we do ask that participants sign up to having both. However, if for some reason you are unable to have one or the other for a short period of time please discuss with your local research team.

12. How do I get my results?

Your results will be given to you by your organisation but how this will happen will vary depending on which site you are enrolled with. Please contact your research team to find out how they will give them to you.

13. I can't make exactly 14 days follow-up – is this a problem?

No, that's not a problem, but ideally we would like you to attend within 2 days either side of your follow-up date.

14. What happens if I can't make a visit?

We know that there may be many reasons why someone can't make a visit – including holidays, illness, other work commitments etc. This is not a problem if you miss one appointment, but we do ask that you attend as many as possible during the year of the study. If you miss several your organisation research team will contact you to ask if you would like to withdraw. Please discuss with your research team, ideally before your absence (if planned); they will advise you when to attend next.

15. I am reporting my symptoms using the questionnaire – do I still need to report any COVID symptoms to people in my organisation?

Yes – you should still report this to your line manager and/or occupational health department immediately if you develop any symptoms of COVID – especially fever, cough or loss or change in smell or taste. Your responses collected by PHE will be used for research and linked to results, but they will not be acted on an individual basis.

RESULTS

16. What will happen if I am identified as positive on the viral swab result?

You will be notified of your result by your organisation by whichever route has been agreed locally; this may either be via the research team, the occupational health team or the microbiology/virology/infection team. Your organisation's occupational health team will advise you as to the measures required, including any necessary self-isolation for yourself and your household, in line with current national guidance. NHS Test and Trace (or relevant contact tracing service for those in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) will also be informed and contact you, which is standard procedure for any positive swab result.

Your positive swab sample will be sent on for further testing of the virus genetic material. If you have a positive swab result on more than one occasion, you may be approached to request further samples in order to undertake more detailed testing.

Please note that SIREN participants are exempt from self-isolation requirements if (a) they receive a repeat-positive PCR test within SIREN within 90 days of a first positive PCR test for which they have self-isolated, and (b) they are asymptomatic. This is now supported by [national legislation](#). National guidelines on self-isolation continue to be in effect, though, e.g. if you return from travel overseas or if you are asked to self-isolate as a contact of a known case.

17. What does it mean if I am antibody positive?

A positive antibody test is consistent with previous exposure to SARS-CoV-2 wild virus or a vaccine, and that your body has produced an immune response. However, what this means with regards to protecting you against future infections remains largely unknown. Please continue to comply with infection control and government guidelines.

18. If I used to be antibody positive but my result is now antibody negative - what does this mean?

There are different reasons why this may occur. These include:

- A fall in blood antibody concentration to levels which are no longer detectable. In this situation we do not know whether you are still immune or not. This is one of the questions

we will be looking at as part of the SIREN study, and the cause of this is not currently well understood.

- Your previous test was a false positive test because you have had exposure to a group of viruses similar to COVID-19.
- A false negative – you have the specific COVID-19 antibodies but your test is incorrectly negative.

Despite these potentially confusing results, please continue to comply with infection control and government guidelines.

OTHER

19. What should I do if I feel unwell and think I might have COVID?

If at any time during the study you develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or you become a contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and are therefore asked to self-isolate at home, then please report your symptoms and access swabbing as you would normally within your organisation in these circumstances. If that is the case, please reschedule any planned SIREN testing appointments for a later date when you are well and back at work.

20. How do I withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw from the study by accessing the study page through the unique link you are sent through text or email. At the end of the study page, there is a link to withdraw from the study. Once you submit a request to withdraw, we will send you a link via email or text and you will be asked to fill in an online form to withdraw from the study. You will only be withdrawn once you have answered all the questions on the form and clicked submit.

21. Can I change my contact details?

Yes, you can change your contact details by accessing the study page through the unique link you are sent through text or email. At the end of the study page, there is a link to update contact details or contact preferences. Once you submit a request to change your details, we will send you a link via text or email and you will be asked to fill in an online form to update your contact details and preferences.

22. I heard that having a COVID test affects life insurance application and arrangements – is this true?

The British Medical Association (BMA) have said the following:

“Having discussed the issue in detail, the BMA and ABI [Association of British Insurers] are clear that there should be no detriment to healthcare workers and no one should be discouraged from having a test. Each application for life insurance and income protection will be assessed on an individual basis, regardless of profession, and focussed on the person’s health and severity of any symptoms at the time. A positive test for COVID (either a PCR or antibody test) should not delay an application as long as the individual has recovered and been back at work for the required period.”

See the following link: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/your-health/covid-19-your-life-insurance>

23. None of these FAQs address my question

Please check [Vaccine FAQs](#) if your query is related to vaccination roll out. For other queries, please contact your organisation’s research team or email phe.siren.participants@phe.gov.uk.