

# Differences in COVID-19 testing are disappearing

The COVID-19 pandemic was officially declared over in May, and the coronavirus is now being treated as equivalent to the flu. As a result, we have made changes to our COVID-19 testing procedures.

Starting from Monday, July 10th, 2023, **there is no longer a need to book an appointment for COVID-19 testing at SYNLAB collection points** (except at the collection point on Tammsaare road, where pre-booking is required). Additionally, we are standardizing the availability of testing – **COVID-19 samples can be taken at all SYNLAB collection points across Estonia** during regular opening hours.

When visiting a collection point with upper respiratory tract diseases symptoms, please wear a mask. This helps protect the people around you. If needed, you can obtain a mask from our collection point.

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## The sample collection points in Tallinn and Harjumaa will be open for a shorter time on October 19

On October 19, 2022, the opening hours of our sample collection points will be different from usual:

- Veerenni blood collection point – 7.30-15.00

- City centre (Kawe) sample collection point – 8.00-14.30 (lunch 12-12.30)
- Ülemiste sample collection point – 8.00-14.30 (lunch 12-12.30)
- Lasnamäe sample collection point – 8.00-14.30 (lunch 12-12.30)
- Viimsi sample collection point – 7.30-14.30 (lunch 12.30-13.00)
- Maardu sample collection point – 8.00-14.00 (lunch 12-12.30)

We apologize for any inconvenience!

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## **General nursing homes received a gift – 200 special mattresses**

**Last week, general nursing homes all over Estonia received 200 special mattresses gifted by the largest Estonian medical laboratory SYNLAB, as the inhabitants of nursing homes have been severely affected by the more than a year-long coronavirus crisis.**

The mattresses made in Estonia are already the second SYNLAB's gift to nursing homes. At the beginning of March, the elderly inhabitants of nursing homes received 118 tablets, which SYNLAB purchased in cooperation with their IT partner Primend. The tablets are equipped with widely used communication software and have special legs designed to help people who cannot hold a screen to use them. The nursing homes could choose which gifts they wanted.

The recently delivered made-to-order SleepAngel mattresses help prevent the spread of infections, the development of bedsores and reduce the nursing home staff's burden of care. Owing to their structure, the mattresses facilitate the care of bed-ridden elderly patients with deteriorated blood circulation, they are easily cleanable and well targeted. SleepAngel, where SYNLAB purchased the mattresses from, also added special express pillows to the gift.

**Marika Tirmaste**, Member of the Board of **Lõhavere Treatment and Nursing Centre in Viljandi County**: "These are good and high-quality mattresses, their height is suitable for customers with a sturdy build. It is too early to give feedback, but just by looking at them I can see that this is a first-rate product. We also took some photos and believe it or not, after we received the gift the sun came out. Once again, my deepest gratitude to all of you. Such a way to notice and acknowledge nursing homes makes our daily work so much more delightful. I hope these wonderful good deeds are "infectious" and inspire others to do something as amazing as this."

**Merike Merirand**, Member of the Board of **Pihlakodu nursing homes**: "Our nursing homes in Kohtla-Järve, Tabasalu and Viimsi received tablets. The nursing homes of Nõmme and Tapa received several mattresses. The tablets have helped carry out a number of heartfelt and joyful meetings. We also use the tablets to conduct joint activities and listen to music. The mattresses were chosen with regard to our patients who spend most of their time in bed. Good sleep is the foundation of a happy day. However, people who need to spend most of their day in bed are able to appreciate the value of a decent mattress particularly well. One of our mobility-impaired inhabitants has been able to enjoy the completely new quality, technology and innovative materials of the mattress for several days now – a heartfelt thanks to SYNLAB for this lovely gift."

**Sirje Bammer**, Director of the **Väike-Maarja Nursing Home**: "Our nursing home chose mattresses because from time to time some

of our inhabitants suffer from bedsores and they benefit from these mattresses the most. One of our clients informed us already after their first night that they slept much better.”

**Sirje Tann**, Director of the **Karula Nursing Home in Valga County**: “For years, we have received a lot of help from our friends: Finland, Germany and now also you, SYNLAB. We thank you. Every gift and support warms our hearts. Today, upon receiving this springtime gift, we feel that we have been noticed and we are needed. In this situation, nursing homes endure particularly dire times. The mattress and pillow will go to a new patient of ours who is currently at the Valga Hospital. The new mattress and pillow are waiting for Leida.”

To deliver the mattresses to those who need them, SYNLAB requested the help of the international car leasing company ALD Automotive, whose employees, having worked from home for a long time, volunteered to drive across the entire Estonia.

**Ivar Vilmer**, Sales Manager of **ALD Automotive**: “We started with the delivery of mattresses from the most distant corner of Estonia, the Kihelkonna nursing home in Saaremaa, and finished a week later in Jõgeva and Viljandi County. Our longest days posted 800 km and 16 hours. We are very grateful that we could physically help solve the very real problems of people. The sincere, honest and positive emotions we witnessed upon delivering SYNLAB’s gifts to the nursing homes will remain with us for a long time.”

Having worked on the frontline of the coronavirus pandemic for over a year, SYNLAB decided to support Estonian nursing homes, as this is where the pandemic affects the inhabitants and caretakers most severely. SYNLAB contacted the Ministry of Social affairs and Social Insurance Board, who helped SYNLAB carry out a survey in nursing homes to determine what their elderly inhabitants need most and what would make them feel better during this worldwide health crisis.

The survey revealed that during the period of nursing home visitor restrictions, the inhabitants mostly missed spending time with their relatives and close ones, as this has been restricted or banned completely since the spring of 2020. The survey conducted among 192 nursing homes operating in Estonia also revealed that the elderly need better mattresses, as they spend a lot of their time in bed.

According to **Raivo Sults**, Head of the Quality Department at the **Social Insurance Board**, SYNLAB is an excellent partner to solve various difficult situations with during a crisis. "We communicate with nursing homes almost every week and they are very grateful for these practical gifts that SYNLAB has distributed to them," said Sults.

Photos of the delivery of the mattresses to nursing homes are [here](#).

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## **SYNLAB to gift tablets and special mattresses to general nursing homes**

Estonia's largest medical laboratory SYNLAB is to gift tablets to nursing homes, helping their inhabitants communicate with their relatives. In addition, SYNLAB will provide nursing homes with comfortable special mattresses.

Having worked on the frontline of the coronavirus pandemic for nearly a year, SYNLAB decided to support Estonian nursing homes, as this is where the pandemic affected the inhabitants and activities most severely. SYNLAB contacted the Ministry of Social affairs and Social Insurance Board, who helped SYNLAB

carry out a survey in nursing homes to determine what their elderly inhabitants need most and what would make them feel better during this worldwide health crisis.

The survey revealed that during the period of nursing home visitor restrictions, the inhabitants mostly missed spending time with their relatives and close ones, as this has been restricted or banned completely since the spring of 2020. SYNLAB together with their IT partner Primend purchased 115 tablets for Estonian nursing homes. The tablets are equipped with widely used communication software. The tablets have special legs designed to help people who cannot hold a screen to use them. User training will also be conducted.

The survey conducted among 192 nursing homes operating in Estonia also revealed that the elderly need better mattresses, as they spend a lot of their time in bed. To fulfil this wish, SYNLAB ordered 200 special mattresses from SleepAngel, preventing the development of bedsores and reducing the nursing home staff's burden of care. The mattresses will be ready for distribution in March and ALD Automotive, one of SYNLAB's transport partners, will take care of the distribution.

**Karin Kallikorm, Customer Service Officer at SYNLAB:** "When working on the frontline of the crisis every day, we can really see who needs our support most. Nursing homes and special care institutions are certainly among them. During full testing rounds in nursing homes, our nurses collecting samples have met many positive and brave seniors who are simply happy that they have someone to talk to. Now that the nursing homes have tablets, the elderly have a chance to meet their close ones online while face-to-face visits are not an option during this difficult time. We hope that the ability to stay in contact with the loved ones will give them strength to weather the crisis."

**Piret Pihel, Director of Saaremaa Südamekodu nursing home:** "We

are very glad that together with SYNLAB we can help our residents communicate with their family. This is important for both sides. The nursing home residents feel that they are cared for; their relatives and close ones can not only hear them but also see first-hand how they are doing. Our staff values the opportunity to undergo a training on how to use the tablets and communication channels, as this will allow our residents to communicate with their close ones without any technical problems.”

**Aile Pilberg, Estonian representative of the SleepAngel trademark:** “We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in the charitable initiative by SYNLAB. Welfare institutions and hospitals are our clients, and we can see how the coronavirus has severely impacted nursing homes. To join SYNLAB’s charitable cause, we offered filtered sleep products manufactured in Estonia, which serve as a barrier against viruses, allergens, pathogens and liquids and therefore contribute to making the nursing home environment safer as well as more comfortable. We processed their order in the factory ahead of the waiting line and added 27 extra mattresses as a gift to make the joint act of good will even more substantial.”

**Rene Kaalo, Chairman of the Board at Primend:** “When SYNLAB proposed that we provide easy-to-use yet durable tablets for nursing homes, we immediately suggested that special legs should be added to the tablets to allow nursing home residents to talk to their relatives from bed, with the tablet resting on the legs in front of the bed. Our specialists installed Skype and Teams in the tablets, and we will also conduct a training session on how to use the tablet, the leg and communication software. We hope that thanks to this initiative, happy reunions will take place starting next weekend.”

**Mārcis Maurinš, Chief Executive of ALD Automotive Baltics**  
“When SYNLAB contacted ALD and presented their initiative that

came straight from the heart, we were quick to decide to join in. We will gladly arrange the necessary transport and help deliver all the mattresses to nursing homes across Estonia. What's more, several ALD staff members offered to act as the drivers distributing the mattresses. We are truly proud to have SYNLAB as our client."

SYNLAB is Estonia's largest medical laboratory and a partner of the Health Board in coronavirus testing, alongside with Medicum and several other private medical establishments and hospitals.

SYNLAB performs over 8.5 million laboratory tests per year in Estonia. SYNLAB employs over 400 people in its laboratories and blood collection points.

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## **SYNLAB adopts a new coronavirus antibodies detection method**

**From today, SYNLAB Eesti laboratory has adopted a new coronavirus antibody detection method, which is more precise than the previous method and also allows it to detect post-vaccination antibody formation.**

Samples for the new antibody test can be given at SYNLAB from today, and in the next few days this will be rolled out at other health care providers across Estonia. The test can also be ordered from family doctors. As the name of the new analysis – quantitative antibody analysis – suggests, the result gives a precise level of coronavirus antibodies.



It is necessary to take a blood test for the laboratory antibody analysis. The blood sample can be given at blood collection points. The results are received from the laboratory by the next working day at the latest.

**Dr Paul Naaber**, Head of Infectious Disease Diagnostics at SYNLAB Eesti, explains: "In two to three weeks after recovering from coronavirus infection, antiviral antibodies are formed in the blood, indicating the body's response to the virus. Similarly, antibodies are formed sometime after vaccination. Based on current research, antibodies are present in the body for at least six months; however, further scientific research may yield more precise results very soon. Until now, the most common coronavirus antibodies detected have been type IgG and type IgM antibodies, and the general recommendation has been to detect them together. The new and more precise quantitative method yields sufficient results by detecting only one type of antibodies – IgG –, which are usually formed on the second week after the onset of symptoms. In addition, the quantitative analysis not only determines the presence of antibodies like the earlier test; it also defines their precise level in blood."

It is recommended to take the new quantitative IgG antibody test no sooner than three weeks after the onset of symptoms, a positive coronavirus test result or vaccination. A positive antibody test result indicates that a person has either contracted and recovered from the infection caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, has a late-stage COVID-19 disease or has developed antibodies due to vaccination. The antibody test is not suitable for primary diagnosis of the disease; this is done using the PCR test taken from the nasopharynx.

For healthcare service providers, the price of the coronavirus antibodies lab test is 13.21 euros (health insurance fund code 66708). For private persons, the cost of coronavirus antibodies detection panel used to be 31 euros; however, the new and more precise quantitative full-service analysis costs

only 14.40 euros, to which the fee for blood test is added.

The test results are displayed in the patient portal digilugu.ee under the coronavirus test results catalogue.

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## **The Estonian Olympic Committee signs a cooperation agreement with SYNLAB to perform coronavirus testing of Team Estonia athletes**

The Estonian Olympic Committee signs a cooperation agreement with SYNLAB to perform 2,500 tests worth around 170,000 euros, which will allow approximately 450 athletes within the Team Estonia programme to be tested for coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 at SYNLAB's coronavirus testing stations all over Estonia.



Urmas Sõõrumaa, the President of the NOC, noted that SYNLAB's support is of great help in the current situation which has resulted in additional costs for the entire sporting community.

"The global sports life has not stooped, which means our athletes travel abroad a lot, and they need to be tested for coronavirus in order for competitions to be held safely. I am glad that the athletes preparing for the 2021 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo and the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing

will be able to follow rules and have a better overview of their health. We are grateful to SYNLAB for cooperation," Sõõrumaa said.

**Rainar Aamisepp, member of the board at SYNLAB Eesti:** "SYNLAB would like to contribute to ensuring that cultural and sports life in Estonia continues. So, we are prepared to contribute to Estonian athletes' smooth preparation for the Olympics by providing them with fast and, in their case, free opportunities to get tested. Numerous athletes and sports federations have approached us with requests to support their operation, and we have decided to do so in cooperation with the Sports Medicine Foundation (*Estonian: Spordimeditsiini SA*) and the Estonian Olympic Committee."

Under the cooperation agreement, the top athletes participating in Team Estonia, the NOC's programme for international competitions, can have a total of 2,500 coronavirus tests until the end of February 2022, which can be a test for the of the virus in the active stage or antibody test to determine if the person was previously ill with the coronavirus. The PCR test allows an athlete's potential infection to be identified early, the person to be isolated immediately, and the spread of the virus among Olympic athletes to be limited. The antibody test allows it to be determined if the person was previously ill with the coronavirus, and a number of countries where our athletes go to take part in training camps and competitions require the results of this tests upon entering the state.

**The following members of Team Estonia can be tested for coronavirus in case of reasonable necessity:**

- Athletes of categories A, B, and C who are receiving Olympics preparation aid;
- athletes who are receiving youth elite sports aid;
- athletes of non-Olympic sports;
- members of the teams for ball games.

In order to ensure the availability of the service, the NOC has the right, if necessary, to limit the number of tests the same athlete or team can take.

To receive a referral for a test, an athlete or federation needs to contact the Sports Medicine Foundation which will decide whether testing is necessary. The athlete's referral will be used by the call centre to contact them and offer an appointment for the testing sample to be taken at one of SYNLAB's coronavirus testing stations in Tallinn, Pärnu, Tartu, Jõhvi, or Narva. The athlete can receive the results in 24–48 hours in the digilugu.ee environment or the mobile application TESTI which can be downloaded at [testi.me](https://testi.me). The TESTI application allows a free certificate to be created which may be required for border crossing.

There is an exception for arriving in Estonia from abroad: in order to have a shorter period of self-isolation, the first test sample needs to be submitted in the area for passengers arriving without vehicles in terminals A and D of the Port of Tallinn or in the airport of Tallinn, where the referral is to be issued on the spot at Confido temporary testing station. The referral for the second test sample (not earlier than 7 days after the first days) will be automatically generated in the evening of the sixth day after the first test was performed.