



Information Sheet E: Temperature checks and thermal scanning

What are temperature checks and thermal scanning?

Temperature checks with no-contact thermometers are being used by some businesses to try and identify people with COVID-19. Thermal scanners (cameras that detect body heat) are also being considered for the same purpose.

Why are they used?

One of the key symptoms of COVID-19 is a fever. Some people believe that by checking temperatures, most infectious people can be detected and kept out of the workplace.

Why temperature checks can be a problem

Many people with COVID-19 do not have a fever, while some people can have fever that is not caused by an infection. So using temperature to detect COVID-19 is not very accurate. Thermal scanners just pick up body surface temperature, and not true fever.

If people focus on fever, they might forget about the other important symptoms of:

- new continuous cough
- loss of or change to your sense of smell or taste.

Temperature checking might give people false reassurance. It is important that everyone continues to:

- wash their hands often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- catch coughs and sneezes into a tissue, throw the tissue in a bin, and wash their hands
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- regularly clean frequently touched surfaces
- stay at home and arrange a test if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/>