

Update on monitoring COVID-19 vaccination

In the preceding week till 11.59pm on September 11, the Department of Health (DH) received 18 reports (Note 1) of adverse events following COVID-19 immunisation. No death cases were reported by the Hospital Authority (HA) involving individuals who had received vaccines within 14 days before they passed away and had potential association with vaccination.

As at 8pm on September 11, around 18.99 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered for members of the public. Around 6.84 million people had received at least one dose of vaccine, including 94.6 per cent of the population aged 12 or above. The DH received 7 901 reports of adverse events (0.04 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered). Among the death cases concerning persons who had been vaccinated, including 119 cases (Note 2) with vaccination within 14 days before they passed away (0.0006 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered), none of the death cases were associated with vaccination.

As of today, the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation had concluded that 97 death cases had no causal relationship with vaccination, while for one case the causal relationship with vaccination could not be established, and preliminarily considered that 11 cases were not associated with vaccination. Ten cases are still pending further information for assessment. The Expert Committee considered that there is no unusual pattern identified so far, and will continue to closely monitor the relevant situation and collect data for assessment.

According to information from the HA, during the period from August 15 to September 11, the overall ratio of death cases was 46.8 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the average ratio of death cases for the same period in 2018 to 2020 was 42.7 cases for every 100 000 people. Among these death cases, the ratio of death cases with acute stroke or acute myocardial infarction was 2.1 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the average ratio of death cases under the same category for the same period in 2018 to 2020 was 2.7 cases for every 100 000 people. Furthermore, the ratio of miscarriage cases was 14.0 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the average ratio of miscarriage cases for the same period in 2018 to 2020 was 19.5 cases for every 100 000 people. Based on the statistical analysis of the above figures, there is no evidence that vaccination increases the risk of death or miscarriage for recipients. The relevant reference statistics will be uploaded to the thematic website for the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

The majority of non-death cases of adverse events received so far are relatively minor cases. The relevant details can be found in the "Report on the Safety Monitoring of COVID-19 Vaccines in Hong Kong"

(www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/doc/Safety_Monitoring_of_COVID-19_Vaccines_i

[n_Hong_Kong.pdf](#)).

A Government spokesman said, "The current epidemic situation remains dire. The number of daily confirmed cases has been staying at a high level. The Hong Kong community must continue to be vigilant and monitor the epidemic development in a prudent manner. Deaths and severe cases involving children and elderly persons have been recorded in the fifth wave of the epidemic. For elderly persons, the COVID-19 vaccination rate for the elderly aged 80 or above in Hong Kong is only around 71 per cent at present, meaning that around 29 per cent of the elderly in that age group are in a dangerous situation, which is alarming.

"According to preliminary data analysis, out of the cases reported in the fifth wave, over 95 per cent of the fatal cases are elderly people aged 60 or above, with the proportion of death and hospitalised cases being the highest in those aged 80 or above. Most of the deceased cases are unvaccinated persons. As compared to the Hong Kong overall population, those who have received three doses of vaccine account for a much lower proportion among reported cases, and an extremely low proportion among the hospitalised critical/serious and deceased cases. This demonstrates the efficacy of three doses of vaccine in preventing infection, serious illness and fatality from COVID-19. Even with just the first dose of vaccine, the risk of death can be significantly reduced. The latest research data from the University of Hong Kong also shows that receiving three doses of either the Comirnaty or CoronaVac vaccine is highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths with an efficacy of over 90 per cent. Members of the public who are currently eligible for a third dose should get the third dose as soon as possible.

"At present, persons aged 50 or above who had received three doses of vaccine may receive the fourth dose three months at minimum after the third dose. Children aged from 6 months to 3 years may also receive the CoronaVac vaccine. In addition to elderly persons, children are also our focus of protection in vaccination. We call on parents to arrange vaccination for their children as early as possible, thus enabling them to have early protection in the face of the threat posed by the highly transmissible mutant virus strains.

"In addition, the Government once again reminds members of the public that recovered persons who had been infected with COVID-19 should get vaccinated in a timely manner. For the Vaccine Pass, the recovery record QR code is valid within 180 days (i.e. six months) from the date of recovery. Recovered person may need to receive one more dose of COVID-19 vaccine to comply with the Vaccine Pass, or update their vaccination records before the expiration of their recovery record QR code. Specifically, recovered persons who had not received any vaccine or had only received one dose of vaccine are required to receive an additional dose (first or second dose) of vaccine before their recovery record QR codes expire, in order to continue to use the Vaccine Pass. As for recovered persons who had received two or more doses of vaccine, they should update their vaccination records through the Electronic Vaccination and Testing Record System (www.evt.gov.hk), the 'iAM Smart' or 'eHealth' mobile applications before their recovery record QR codes expire,

in order to continue to use the Vaccine Pass."

The spokesman also reminded that the vaccination requirements for persons aged 12 or above under the Vaccine Pass will be changed to having received three doses of vaccine starting November 30. Members of the public should receive the respective dosage of vaccine timely, such that they can get better protection for themselves and continue to use the Vaccine Pass for entering applicable premises.

Note 1: Provisional figures. In the preceding week till 11.59pm on September 11, the DH did not receive any reports of suspected myocarditis or pericarditis involving adolescents in the age group of 3 to 15, and did not receive any reports of serious or unexpected adverse events following COVID-19 immunisation for children aged under 3.

Note 2: In the preceding week till 11.59pm on September 11, the DH did not receive any reports involving individuals who had received COVID-19 vaccination within 14 days before passing away.

Hospital Authority continues to transfer patients to private hospitals

The COVID-19 epidemic situation remains severe. Apart from continuing to transfer inpatients to private hospitals, the Hospital Authority (HA) has been actively transferring patients who do not need to occupy hospital beds to receive medical services at private hospitals, with a view to maintaining the effective operation of the public healthcare system through more flexible means.

Although the number of daily new cases of Hong Kong has shown signs of decline, citizens might have participated in more frequent social gatherings during the previous Mid-Autumn Festival holidays. The epidemic development still requires prudent monitoring, and the number of hospitalised patients in public hospitals may stay high in the short term. The HA will continue to arrange suitable inpatients and other patients (e.g. users of non-emergency services) to receive medical services at private hospitals, thereby allowing different patients to receive treatment as early as practicable on the premise of alleviating the burden on the public healthcare system.

Following an earlier meeting between the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, and the representatives of the Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association, all 13 private hospitals provided 364 beds at the initial stage, of which the number can be gradually brought up to around 1 000 depending on the actual demand. Upon recent liaison between the HA and private hospitals, 423 hospital beds have now been made available (see Annex). In particular,

Hong Kong Adventist Hospital – Tsuen Wan and CUHK Medical Centre have further deployed more beds, with the former planning to provide additional hospital beds this week for receiving more HA patients.

Should the epidemic subsequently subside, the occupancy rate of relevant hospital beds may decrease accordingly. The HA will maintain its close liaison with private hospitals to adjust the number of hospital beds which private hospitals need to provide. Furthermore, some private hospitals have been actively participating in the anti-epidemic initiatives under the Public-Private Partnership of the HA, such as offering medical support in holding centres, as well as providing teleconsultation and drug delivery services to COVID-19 patients such that patients in need may obtain the antiviral drugs as early as possible.

Professor Lo said, “I wish to express my gratitude to various private hospitals for having successively allocated more beds to handle more transfer cases. At the same time, by offering medical services to patients from public hospitals who do not need to occupy hospital beds, private hospitals have assisted in mitigating the impact brought by HA’s adjustment of non-emergency services to combat the epidemic. I hope that private hospitals will continue their active collaboration with the HA, and urge patients and their family members to co-operate with the arrangement.”

The HA reiterated that public hospitals will conduct a professional evaluation to ensure that a patient is suitable for transfer to private hospitals before making the arrangement. Patients only need to pay at a level equivalent to the charges of HA services for their stay at the private hospitals or usage of medical services specified in the transfer arrangement. For those patients who are eligible for medical fee waiver, they will still be able to enjoy such waiver as in the case of using HA services.

Government gazettes compulsory testing notice

â€‹The Government exercises the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publishes in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, which requires any person who had been present at 60 specified places during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

In view of a number of cases testing positive, 55 specified places are included in the compulsory testing notice. Furthermore, since some sewage samples collected in Shau Kei Wan and Ma On Shan have tested positive, five specified premises are included in the compulsory testing notice. The

Government strongly reminds members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo testing on time as required. Mobile specimen collection stations have been set up by the Government in different districts to facilitate testing to be conducted in compliance with the compulsory testing notice. The above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well.

Persons who have tested positive in the past three months (including positive cases tested either by nucleic acid tests recorded by the Department of Health (DH) or by rapid antigen tests (RATs) that have been self-declared to the DH) do not need to undergo compulsory testing. For those who are subject to compulsory testing (save for those who have declared their positive RAT results as mentioned above), they must undergo nucleic acid tests in accordance with relevant compulsory testing notices and cannot use RATs to fulfil the requirement of such notices. In other words, a negative RAT result cannot be deemed as fulfilling the compulsory testing requirement. Furthermore, unless a person subject to compulsory testing has obtained a medical certificate proving that he or she is unfit to undergo testing using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs because of health reasons, the person cannot provide a deep throat saliva sample to fulfil the compulsory testing requirement.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are available on the Centre for Health Protection (CHP)'s website via the following link: www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ctn_20220914.pdf.

If any persons test positive under compulsory testing, such positive cases will be handled in the same manner as in those identified through other nucleic acid tests or self-declared through RATs. Their isolation arrangements (as well as the quarantine arrangements of their household members) are no different from other positive cases.

Persons subject to compulsory testing in accordance with a compulsory testing notice must undergo professional swab sampling at any of the mobile specimen collection stations, community testing centres (CTCs) or recognised local medical testing institutions in order to fulfill the requirements for compulsory testing. Young children may continue to undergo the test using a stool specimen. For details on obtaining stool specimen bottles, please refer to the COVID-19 thematic website: www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/Stool_bottle_collection_points.pdf.

If Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above, the Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or the post-super typhoon "extreme conditions" announcement by the Government is in force at any time during the period for undergoing the compulsory testing, the period for undergoing the compulsory testing will be extended for one day.

The Comirnaty and CoronaVac vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from COVID-19. They can provide protection to those vaccinated to prevent serious complications and even death after infection. The Government appeals to persons who are not yet vaccinated to get vaccinated without delay. The Government is working towards the goal of

boosting the vaccination rates of children, teenagers and the elderly so that they can be protected by the vaccines as early as possible. Furthermore, the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the CHP of the DH has earlier updated the consensus interim recommendations that a three-dose series of Comirnaty vaccine (each dose is one-tenth of that for an adult) may be administered to children aged six months to under five years; and a three-dose series of CoronaVac vaccine (each dose of the same dosage as that for an adult) for children aged six months to less than three years. Besides, persons aged 50 and above may receive the fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine after at least three months from the third dose. Members of the public who are eligible should get the fourth dose as early as possible for better protection.

CTCs provide testing services for the public. Booking and walk-in services are available. Members of the public only need to provide simple personal information on the 24-hour booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en). The system shows the booking status of the centres for the coming two weeks to facilitate the public's planning and selection of a suitable testing centre and a time slot for testing. The testing centres will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. As of 6pm today (September 14), there was around 96 per cent availability for booking places for the coming two weeks. Members of the public may call the testing centres for enquiries on the availability of bookings or walk-in quotas before visiting the centres.

The Government will reopen the mobile specimen collection stations at Wah Fu (II) Estate in Pok Fu Lam and Cheung Hang Estate in Tsing Yi tomorrow (September 15). The mobile specimen collection station at Wing Shue House of Lei Muk Shue Estate in Tsuen Wan will be relocated to the open area outside Fung Shue House tomorrow and the service period will be extended to September 16 (Friday). The service period of the mobile specimen collection stations at Chuk Yuen North Estate in Wong Tai Sin and Wang Tau Hom Estate in Lok Fu will also be extended to September 16 (Friday). Separately, ticketing machines have been installed in a number of service points for on-site ticket arrangement. Members of the public who have obtained a ticket can visit the CTC website (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en) to check the real-time queueing ticket status. Booking service is also provided for some large-scale mobile specimen collection stations, and members of the public may use the 24-hour booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en) to reserve a suitable time slot for testing. Moreover, members of the public can now fill in their personal information in advance to obtain the Testing Registration Code QR code through the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application. They can present that QR code for scanning before testing at a service point thereafter, thus saving their time spent on registration and queueing.

Other than persons subject to compulsory testing, all members of the public may conduct free testing at CTCs or mobile specimen collection stations (if the service scope is applicable). The Government will also continue to provide free nucleic acid testing service for eligible persons of targeted groups, visitors to public hospitals and residential care homes and

all elderly people aged 60 or above at CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations. The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations are stated in the Annex.

Outdoor mobile specimen collection stations will be closed if the Strong Wind Signal No. 3 or Red Rainstorm Warning Signal has been issued, while all mobile specimen collection stations together with all CTCs will be closed when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above or the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is in force. Any changes in the arrangements of testing service will be announced on site, and members of the public may also pay attention to the relevant press releases.

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

(a) For tests which require using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable)

at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;

2. To attend any of the CTCs (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en);

3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list

at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf), and the relevant sample must be taken through combined nasal and throat swabs; or

4. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the stool sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

(b) For persons holding a medical certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner proving that they are unfit to undergo testing using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs because of health reasons

1. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from post offices, vending machines set up at MTR stations or designated general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times,

at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);

2. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority; or

3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results.

A Government spokesman cautioned that testing received at the Accident and Emergency Departments of the Hospital Authority, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notice.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should

seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the CTCs."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notifications containing the result of the test and the relevant medical certificate (if applicable) for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and the maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months. The fixed penalty for discharging the liability is \$10,000. The person may also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Any person in breach of the compulsory testing order would be liable to a fine at level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or had contact with cases tested positive), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."

Hong Kong Customs highly concerned about business closure of bakery chain causing losses to consumers

Hong Kong Customs noticed that a bakery chain suddenly announced last night (September 13) that it had suspended its business. Customers who had purchased cake coupons or gift vouchers therefore could not redeem the products concerned.

As of 5pm today (September 14), Customs had currently received one complaint regarding the bakery chain. The department has been contacting the complainant for case details in order to commence an investigation.

Customs appeals to consumers who have purchased cake coupons or gift vouchers from the bakery chain to contact Customs as soon as possible.

Customs will immediately conduct an investigation based on the information upon the receipt of complaints.

Customs is highly concerned about the incident and has set up a dedicated team to conduct a follow-up. The department will continue to closely monitor the situation. Should there be any violation of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TD0), Customs will take enforcement action.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TD0. Consumers are also reminded to procure cake coupons or gift vouchers at reputable shops and think prudently before making consumption decisions with a prepayment.

Under the TD0, any trader commits an offence if at the time of acceptance of payment, the trader intends not to supply the product or intends to supply a materially different product, or there are no reasonable grounds for believing that the trader will be able to supply the product within a specified or reasonable period. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 0.00am today (September 14), a total of 2 834 patients who tested positive for COVID-19 are currently hospitalised for treatment, including 311 new patients. Among the patients staying in isolation facilities, 471 patients are in isolation wards, 201 patients are in second-tier isolation wards, 550 patients are in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre and 213 patients are in the Treatment Centre for COVID-19 (AsiaWorld-Expo), of which 193 in total are new patients. There are nine newly reported critical patients and nine newly reported serious patients. There are a total of 51 patients in critical condition and 55 are in serious condition, of which 13 critical patients are receiving intensive care. Moreover, there are 352 patients who have recovered, including 313 patients who have been discharged. In addition, 10 patients who passed away in public hospitals were reported.

In the fifth wave of the epidemic, there are 67 386 patients who have recovered so far, including 67 046 patients who have been discharged. And

since early 2020, there are 79 766 patients who have recovered, including 79 426 patients who have been discharged.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.