

CHP investigates 11 confirmed and 13 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases, updates cases classification and identifies 11 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 21) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 21, the CHP was investigating 11 additional confirmed cases and 13 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 24 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours). This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 12 918 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 198 and four respectively, i.e. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 13 120 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of six imported cases, 11 cases epidemiologically linked with imported cases, two local cases, and five cases epidemiologically linked with local cases. Twenty of the cases involve mutant strains, the mutation test results of three cases are pending, and the viral load of the remaining case is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 11 males and 13 females, aged 14 to 82. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

The 11 cases epidemiologically linked with imported cases are 13108 (63-year-old male who is a family member of cases 12944 and 12960 living together); 13112 and 13122 (67-year-old male and 54-year-old female, who are family members of case 13072); 13114 (14-year-old female who is a classmate of case 13098); 13121 (46-year-old female who is a family member of cases 13079 and 13091 living together); as well as six cases related to Yat Kwai House, Kwai Chung Estate, Kwai Chung (13104, 13111, 13113, 13116, 13117 and 13125, involving six females aged between 28 and 69).

The two local cases are 13103 (24-year-old male who lives in Cheung Yan House, Cheung Sha Wan Estate, 9 Tonkin Street, Cheung Sha Wan) and 13107 (37-year-old male who lives in Tower 1, New Haven, 363 Sha Tsui Road, Tsuen Wan). The five cases epidemiologically linked with local cases are 13110 (82-year-old male who visited the restaurant Dragon Place, 1/F, Aberdeen Centre Site 3, same as case 13073); 13118 and 13123 (38-year-old female and 42-year-old male, who are family members of cases 13059 and 13073 living together); 13120 (30-year-old female who bought a hamster at Little Boss pet shop in Causeway Bay on January 11); and 13124 (23-year-old female who bought a hamster at

Little Boss at Kai Wan Building, 142-146 Tung Choi Street, Mong Kok on January 4).

Also, the CHP announced earlier that further epidemiological information revealed that case 13064 went to Yat Kwai House, Chin Kwai House and Luk Kwai House of Kwai Chung Estate on January 13, and stayed in the garbage rooms of the buildings concerned. It was preliminarily opined that case 13064 spread the virus to relevant workers or residents of that building during his stay at Yat Kwai House. As such, relevant cases 13085, 13090 and 13100 are reclassified from local case/possibly local-related case to cases epidemiologically linked with an imported case.

A total of 264 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 7 to 20). Seventy-eight of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases, four are local cases, two are cases epidemiologically linked with local case, and the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 13001, 13002, 13038, 13039, 13042, 13043, 13046, 13048 to 13050 and 13079 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 506 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for cases with mutant strains, persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

The CHP strongly reminded members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo the multiple tests on time as required. The compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well. The Government will seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months. Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). The Government reiterates that the aim of issuing a compulsory testing notice is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community as soon as possible to protect overall public health and safety.

With the higher transmissibility and risk of infection of the Omicron mutant strain, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to comply with the recently tightened social distancing measures in the next two weeks, and to refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings (particularly religious or cross-family activities and gatherings). This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

â€‹The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "The global situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility, and there are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."