

CHP investigates locally acquired SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 1 544 cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests and 5 668 cases by RATs as well as 524 imported cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (November 20) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, November 20, the CHP was investigating 7 212 additional locally acquired cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, comprising 1 544 cases that tested positive by nucleic acid tests (800 confirmed cases, 631 asymptomatic cases and 113 cases with pending status) and 5 668 cases that tested positive by rapid antigen tests (RATs) in the past 24 hours.

Separately, 524 additional imported cases were reported, comprising 457 cases that tested positive by nucleic acid tests (82 confirmed cases, 315 asymptomatic cases and 60 cases with pending status) and 67 cases that tested positive by RATs. Among the additional imported cases, 260 of them involved samples at the airport, 171 involved samples during Day 1 to Day 3, and the remaining 93 involved samples during Day 4 to Day 7.

Hong Kong has recorded a total of 1 031 615 and 1 005 066 cases that have tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations of the cases. Please refer to the Annex and the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for more information.

The CHP has been closely monitoring the situation of positive cases involving mutant strains by genetic analysis. As of 0.00am, November 20, the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) had identified 223 cases of sub-lineage XBB, six of XBD, eight of BA.2.75.2, seven of BA.4.6, 12 of BF.7 and 34 of BQ.1.1 among imported cases in Hong Kong, while 50 cases of sub-lineage XBB, 16 of XBD, one of BA.2.75.2, one of BF.7 and 64 of BQ.1.1 have also been detected among local cases.

Among the specimens received by the DH's PHLSB during November 11 to 17 for verification testing of local cases, 0 per cent and about 80.5 per cent of them (seven-day moving average) are related to the sub-lineages BA.2.12.1 and BA.4/BA.5 (including suspected cases) of the Omicron mutant strain respectively.

In addition, as of 0.00am, November 20, a total of 10 386 death cases that had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded, with 10 296 and 86 deaths reported

from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively as well as four deaths reported from private hospitals. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 10 599 death cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Furthermore, among the earlier cases by nucleic acid tests reported, there were cases (including pending cases) that were changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As of yesterday (November 19), the total number of confirmed cases was 448 733, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 335 191, 31 and 245 659 respectively.

The spokesman for the CHP said that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. People who have yet to receive vaccination, especially senior citizens, chronic patients, children and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, should get vaccinated as early as possible for self-protection and to reduce the risk of falling seriously ill and death should they get infected.

The CHP appeals to the community to keep on maintaining personal hygiene and comply with social distancing measures in order to jointly contain the risk of virus transmission. The spokesman reminded members of the public that they can call various hotlines to make enquiries on COVID-19 (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html#hotline).