

Government reminds public of cancellation of issuing isolation orders from January 30 onwards

The Government earlier announced that to continue the gradual resumption to normalcy of society, the management and handling of the COVID-19 epidemic could be progressed to a new stage and mode. The Government today (January 27) reminded members of the public that, starting from next Monday (January 30), the compulsory isolation arrangement for infected persons will be cancelled and the Health Officer will no longer issue isolation orders to infected persons according to the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A). All persons tested positive (including by nucleic acid and rapid antigen tests (RATs)) are not required to report and provide personal particulars via the online platforms of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH). They should take the advice on various health measures against respiratory infection diseases. As regards the monitoring of the epidemic and the disseminating of related information, the CHP will upload onto the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" every day the number of specimens that tested positive by nucleic acid tests as well as the number of death cases because of COVID-19 infection in lieu of the current practice of issuing press releases.

Apart from that, the Government will adjust the scope of target groups for free nucleic acid testing services at community testing centres/stations, including the termination of free testing provided for persons undergoing voluntary testing at appropriate times according to the situation, so as to focus resources on protecting high-risk premises and groups in need of regular nucleic acid testing.

Arrangements of cancelling of isolation orders

Starting from January 30, the Health Officer will no longer issue isolation orders to infected persons according to Cap. 599A. All persons tested positive are not required to report and provide personal particulars via the online platforms of the CHP. The "Declaration System for Individuals Tested Positive for COVID-19 Using Rapid Antigen Test" (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp), the "Online self-reporting for COVID-19 patient" (www.chp.gov.hk/cdpi), as well as the relevant automatic telephone voice registration system (183 6119) will also cease operation on the same day.

Meanwhile, the Health Officer will cancel the active isolation orders issued by that time. In other words, those who are currently under isolation at designated premises including their places of residence or isolation facilities will no longer be required to continue their isolation starting from January 30. The Government will arrange for those staying in the isolation facilities to leave in an orderly manner and gazette the notice of relevant cancellation arrangements. In view of the aforementioned

adjustments, the Government will also suspend the distribution of anti-epidemic kits to persons tested positive.

Health advice to infected persons

Members of the public who tested positive are advised to take the advice on various health measures for preventing respiratory diseases. They should observe personal hygiene, reduce contacts with household members when not wearing masks, open windows to ensure adequate ventilation of the unit, and clean and disinfect household environment every day.

For infected persons who belong to high-risk groups or develop obvious symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, shortness of breath, vomiting and diarrhoea), they should seek medical attention as soon as possible to obtain timely treatment. Symptomatic persons should stay at home for rest and avoid going out, while asymptomatic persons can go out at will or go to work. To protect the young, students who have tested positive should not attend schools until they have tested negative by RATs. Infected persons should wear well-fitting surgical masks, KF94, KN95 masks, or respirators (such as N95 masks) during the first five days after testing positive. They should avoid having contact with high-risk individuals or having meals with other people at the same table. They should not go to crowded places or attend mass gatherings to lower the risk of transmission.

Infected persons should observe their own health condition at all times, and seek medical attention as soon as possible if symptoms develop or worsen. As the Government will no longer issue isolation orders, those who do not feel well and are in need of sick leave certificates should seek medical attention from a registered medical practitioner or Chinese medicine practitioner. Doctors will provide diagnosis and treatment and will issue sick leave certificates to patients according to their clinical situation. People tested positive without symptoms should avoid going to public hospitals or general out-patient clinics so as to preserve valuable public healthcare service capacity for those in need. The list of private doctors registered with the Electronic Health Record Sharing System who have obtained the COVID-19 antivirals for managing COVID-19 cases is published on www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/tp_pd_antiviral.pdf to help the public receive treatment.

Arrangements on community isolation facilities

Having considered that some infected persons may wish to stay at the community isolation facilities (CIFs) to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19 in the household if their living environment is crowded or their household members fall into high-risk groups, the CIFs will remain in operation for a short period of time for use by Hong Kong residents. Recently infected persons who are Hong Kong residents and need to stay at CIFs may contact the Fire Services Department (Whatsapp platform: 5233 2939; Email: fsd_cif@hkfsd.gov.hk; WeChat: fsd_cif) for transfer arrangement if needed and can stay at the CIF for up to seven days. If they choose to leave

the CIF earlier, negative results by RATs are not required but they cannot return to the CIF once they have left. Given that confinees are admitted to the CIF on a voluntary basis, they will not be issued with any sick leave certificate or proof of infection by the Civil Aid Service, the Hospital Authority or the DH.

Separately, for residents at residential care homes who are infected and have received less than three doses of COVID-19 vaccine, arrangement can be made for them to stay at the holding centres managed by the Social Welfare Department where care services are available. Residents who develop serious symptoms, regardless of the number of vaccine doses they have received, will be assessed by healthcare professionals based on their symptoms and conditions and be sent to hospitals for treatment if needed. The above transitional arrangements of CIFs and holding centres will last until February 28 (with February 21 being the last date for admission application).