

DH sets up temporary specimen collection centre to speed up specimen collection from inbound travellers from overseas

The Department of Health will set up a temporary specimen collection centre at the AsiaWorld-Expo tomorrow (March 26) to speed up the collection of specimen from inbound travellers from overseas for conducting testing for COVID-19 and facilitate those who have difficulty in arranging family members or friends to submit their specimen.

Starting at midnight today (March 25), the CHP has extended its Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme to provide free testing for COVID-19 to asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving from the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe. With its smooth operation, the programme has further been extended to cover asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving from the United States this afternoon.

The DH's temporary specimen collection centre will operate from 7.30am to 11pm daily. Inbound travellers will be provided with a specimen collection container at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA). Starting tomorrow, they can choose to take shuttle bus from the HKIA immediately to the temporary specimen collection centre to collect their deep throat saliva sample there in accordance with the instructions and submit it to the DH personnel on duty at the venue. Afterwards, they have to go to their accommodation for the compulsory quarantine as soon as possible by their own means. Otherwise, they should collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at home on a designated date, and ask their family members or friends deliver it to any of the collection points in the same morning.

Samples can be sent to 13 designated chest clinics or dermatological clinics under the DH from 9am to 11am on Monday to Sunday and some General Out-patient clinics under the Hospital Authority from 8.30am to 9.30am on Monday to Friday (except public holiday).

If a sample tests positive, the CHP will notify the person concerned as early as possible and arrange for admission to a public hospital for treatment. In general, if no notification is received within three working days after returning a sample, it means the test result is negative and the person concerned is required to continue the quarantine until the quarantine period ends.

A spokesman for the DH urged inbound travellers who choose to collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at home to collect and arrange to hand in their sample as early as possible so that relevant virus testing can be arranged by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch as soon

as possible. This will help identify asymptomatic patients and minimise the risk of community transmission.

Update on COVID-19 test centres

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

From March 20 to 9pm today (March 25), 370 and 87 travellers have been referred to the test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital respectively for COVID-19 viral test. So far, 397 travellers have negative test results for COVID-19 and have returned to their residence to continue the 14-day home quarantine.

Preliminary positive test results will be further confirmed by the Department of Health and announced as confirmed cases in due course.

CHP investigates 24 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 4pm today (March 25), the CHP is investigating 24 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 411 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 410 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve 13 males and 11 females aged between 11 and 57. Among them, 19 had travel history during the incubation period. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex.

For information on flights that patients of the confirmed cases have taken, please refer to the following webpage: (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/flights_trains_en.pdf). Passengers who travelled on the same flights and sat within two seats surrounding those patients are urged to call the CHP hotlines 2125 1111 and 2125 1122.

The CHP reminded those who have returned to Hong Kong from overseas or visited overseas before the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) took effect on March 19 that, although they are not subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine, they

should stay home and avoid going out as far as possible for 14 days. They should wear surgical mask, maintain stringent personal hygiene as a measure to protect themselves and their family members. They should seek medical advice as soon as possible if symptoms develop to safeguard the health of themselves, family and friends as well as the general public.

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons, who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "In view of proliferation of the disease and continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong."

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes."

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps); cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use; after using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

The CHP will report the cases to the World Health Organization, National Health Commission, Health Commission of Guangdong Province, relevant health authorities and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up the hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 4pm today, a total of 54 546 calls were received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on the COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including hand hygiene

before wearing and after removing a mask;

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a liter of water into each drain outlet (U-traps) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

Postal services to certain destinations suspended or subject to delay

Hongkong Post announced today (March 25) an updated list including new destinations with airmail and/or Speedpost services suspended as a result of the reduction or cancellation of flights by airlines.

Destinations		Service Type
Asia	Azerbaijan, Israel, Jordan, Gaza and Khan Yunis	Airmail (including Speedpost)
	Iraq	Air Letter
Africa	Republic of Congo, Morocco, Sudan	Airmail (including Speedpost)

Central and South America	Bolivia, Suriname	Airmail (except Speedpost)
	Chile	Airmail (including Speedpost)
Europe	Armenia	Airmail (including Speedpost)
Oceania	Angola, Vanuatu	Speedpost
	Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Nauru, Caroline Island, Mariana Islands, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Wake Island	Airmail (including Speedpost)
	Wallis and Futuna Islands	Airmail (except Speedpost)
	Solomon Islands	Speedpost and Air Parcel
	Kiribati, Tonga, Tuvalu, Samoa (U.S.A. Territory), Western Samoa	Air Parcel

Another updated list is appended below to include new destinations with postal services to these destinations suspended or subject to delay as a result of local postal operation.

Destinations		Service delay/suspension
Asia	Afghanistan	Delayed (Surface Parcel)
	Georgia, Malaysia, Singapore	Delayed
	Maldives, Philippines	Suspended
Africa	Cameroon	Delayed (Air Letter)
	Tunisia	Suspended

Central and South America	Cayman Island	Suspended
	Chile, Honduras, Jamaica	Delayed
Europe	Norway, Romania, Spitsbergen	Delayed
	Cyprus, North Macedonia	Suspended (Airmail including Speedpost)
North America	Canada	Delayed
Oceania	Easter Island, French Polynesia, New Caledonia	Suspended

Due to the substantial reduction in flight frequencies, airmail to a large number of destinations may be subject to considerable delays of more than two weeks in handing posted items to airlines subsequent to Hongkong Post's completion of the handling procedures after posting.

Members of the public are advised to visit the Hongkong Post website at https://www.hongkongpost.hk/en/about_us/whats_new/notices/index_id_893.html and https://www.hongkongpost.hk/en/about_us/whats_new/notices/index_id_894.html to refer to all destinations and their respective services affected.

[CE visits temporary accommodation at Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre \(with photos/video\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (March 25) visited the temporary accommodation at Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre to encourage the government staff and volunteers who are managing the site and inspect the accommodation facilities as well as the quarantine units under construction.

Accompanied by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong; the Director of Architectural Services, Mrs Sylvia Lam; and the Deputy Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (Leisure Services), Ms Ida Lee, Mrs Lam met with staff members of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) who are responsible for the daily operation of the temporary accommodation site.

She listened to their briefing on the services provided to people under quarantine, including holding briefings, arranging rooms, distributing supplies and handling meals. She also chatted with a team of volunteers from the Customs and Excise Department to learn about their work in assisting in the management of the site.

"Although disease prevention and control is not within the scope of work of the colleagues of the LCSD and the volunteers, they have been working as a team amid the COVID-19 epidemic and proactively took up the responsibility of managing the temporary accommodation, thereby contributing in the fight against the virus. They are heroes behind the scenes and I express my heartfelt gratitude to them," Mrs Lam said.

Temporary accommodation is arranged for persons who enter Hong Kong from the Mainland or who have been to the Mainland in the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong and are unable to arrange accommodation locally to undergo the 14-day compulsory quarantine period.

Mrs Lam then inspected the temporary quarantine units being built with modular integrated construction (MiC) at the football pitch of the centre. She noted that 20 MiC units have been completed and some 70 units are under construction with installation of fittings expected to be completed in April.

In view of the development of the disease outbreak, the Government has been actively looking for suitable sites and setting up more quarantine facilities as quickly as possible since late January. In addition to Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre, quarantine facilities are also being constructed through the application of the MiC method at Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village in Chai Wan, the Junior Police Call Permanent Activity Centre at Pat Heung, Yuen Long and a government site at Penny's Bay, providing at least 1 000 units as quarantine facilities in total. The units can be completed and put into use from this month to around July in phases. Mrs Lam thanked colleagues of the Architectural Services Department, relevant government departments and the contractors for their hard work in building more quarantine facilities. They have strived to build the highest number of temporary units within short periods of time, demonstrating their spirit to fight the disease together.



