

Hospital Authority strengthens its services to provide continuous support to COVID-19 patients

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (January 27) that in order to align with the government's cancellation of issuing isolation orders from next Monday (January 30), respective medical units will strengthen their services and continue to support COVID-19 patients.

The HA spokesman said, "After the concerned arrangement comes into effect, some infected patients may seek consultation in the General Out-patient Clinics (GOPCs). The HA has strengthened its manpower to cope with the possible increase in service demand. The HA Emergency Operation Command will closely monitor the situation and flexibly deploy resources to meet service demands so as to support necessary patients."

GOPC services and enquiry hotline

All GOPCs of the HA, including the seven Designated Clinics for COVID-19 confirmed cases and the GOPCs that had suspended some services earlier will resume normal out-patient clinic service starting from next Monday. The HA will reserve more quotas for patients with episodic diseases including COVID-19 patients in order to strengthen support to relevant patients. GOPCs will reserve certain quotas for high-risk confirmed patients (including the elderly, children aged five or below, women at 28 or more weeks of pregnancy, and immunocompromised patients) to make appointments through the following ways:

1. using the COVID-19 Care Booking (GOPC) function of the "HA Go" mobile app or seven "Care Booking Line" to book an appointment (Annex);
2. using the GOPC Telephone Appointment System to book an appointment, and the elderly appointment quota will be allocated for elderly patients according to the information provided;
3. the HA enquiry hotline 1836 115 will continue to provide assistance for patients, including the referral of confirmed patients who are in need of GOPCs for further treatment.

Other confirmed patients can make appointments through the "Book GOPC" function in the "HA Go" mobile app or the GOPC Telephone Appointment System.

Accident and Emergency (A&E) services

The HA will closely monitor the situation of every A&E department in public hospitals and arrange additional manpower to cope with the service

demand when necessary. The HA urges confirmed patients with mild symptoms or lower risk to consult private doctors who can prescribe COVID-19 oral drugs, so as to alleviate the pressure on the A&E or GOPCs services. Please refer to the list of private doctors through the hyperlink:
www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/tp_pd_antiviral.pdf.

Chinese Medicine services

Confirmed patients can also seek consultations at the Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres (CMCTRs) in the 18 districts. The HA will closely monitor the service demand and will mobilise resources to strengthen services when necessary. For the arrangement of the CMCTRs, please visit the link below: cmk.ha.org.hk/index.

Visiting arrangement

Starting on next Wednesday (February 1), all visitors can be arranged for a two-hour visit daily, except in isolation wards, according to the visiting sessions and time of each ward without a prior appointment. Subject to the situation in the ward, up to two visitors can enter the ward to visit the patient at the same time. An exchange of visitors is allowed with a maximum of three visitors. All visitors must provide a nucleic acid test negative result obtained within 48 hours prior to the visit with a view to protecting patients and reducing the risk of viral transmission. They have to strictly comply with the infection control measures, such as wearing surgical masks and undergoing temperature checks. Visitors who have recovered from COVID-19, if they could provide relevant proof or documents of infection and recovery, are exempted from the above testing requirement within three months from the specimen collection date of positive test result.

Hospital fee arrangement

Eligible Persons (EP) who are infected will be charged according to the rate applicable for EP when attending GOPCs, CMCTRs or public hospitals. For Non-eligible Persons (NEP) who attended an A&E or were admitted into hospitals for urgent treatment and services, they will be charged according to the rate applicable to the NEP regardless of whether they are infected. If COVID-19 oral drugs are prescribed in the treatment process, the NEP are also required to pay for the relevant drugs.

"The HA will fully cooperate with the Government's policies and closely monitor the service needs of different medical units to ensure that confirmed patients can receive treatment promptly. The HA will continue to adjust services according to the situation to take care of other patients in need," the HA spokesman added.

Appeal for information on missing woman in Hung Hom (with photo)

Police today (January 27) appealed to the public for information on a woman who went missing in Hung Hom.

Chan Ling-lee, aged 22, went missing after she was last seen in a car park at Ka Wai Chuen yesterday (January 26). Her family made a report to Police on the same day.

She is about 1.6 metres tall, 70 kilograms in weight and of fat build. She has a round face with yellow complexion and short black hair. She was last seen wearing a black and green jacket, black trousers and pink slippers.

Anyone who knows the whereabouts of the missing woman or may have seen her is urged to contact the Regional Missing Persons Unit of Kowloon West on 3661 8036 or 9020 6542 or email to rmpu-kw@police.gov.hk, or contact any police station.



Missing man in Wong Tai Sin located

A man who went missing in Wong Tai Sin has been located.

Lau Chun, aged 57, went missing after he left his residence in Ching Ming House, Tsz Ching Estate on January 25 night. His family reported to Police on the same day.

The man was located outside a temple on Shatin Pass Road this afternoon (January 27). No suspicious circumstances were detected.

HAD "StayHomeSafe" hotline and Home Support Supplies Delivery Service to cease operation

The Home Affairs Department announced today (January 27) that as the Government will cease to issue isolation orders to infected persons with effect from January 30, the "StayHomeSafe" hotline (1833 019) will cease to accept requests for basic daily necessities and food from infected persons starting from January 30. The hotline will cease operation starting from 11pm on February 5.

The "StayHomeSafe" hotline has commenced operation since early February last year to provide support to COVID-19 infected persons under home isolation and close contacts under home quarantine (hereinafter as "persons under home isolation/quarantine"). The Home Support Supplies Delivery Service (HSSDS), covering the whole territory of Hong Kong, has been delivering supplies to persons under home isolation/quarantine who cannot make their own arrangements for basic daily necessities or food since mid March last year. As at yesterday (January 26), the "StayHomeSafe" hotline has received over 1 160 000 calls, while the HSSDS has provided nearly 590 000 supply packs to about 210 000 households.

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).