

## Government continues to provide free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing service for the elderly and targeted groups

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) announced today (April 30) that free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing service is being provided for eligible persons of high-risk/high-exposure targeted groups and all elderly people aged 60 or above at community testing centres (CTCs) and mobile specimen collection stations so as to achieve the goal of "early identification, early isolation and early treatment" and enable more vulnerable infected elderly to seek timely medical attention and be prescribed with treatment drugs.

To encourage the elderly to undergo frequent COVID-19 testing for effective and early identification of infected persons, the Government has extended the free COVID-19 nucleic acid test service to elderly people aged 60 or above. They can undergo free COVID-19 nucleic acid test with swab samples collected by professionals at around 100 CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations in various districts of Hong Kong without the need for booking in advance. Elderly people tested negative (whether by rapid antigen test (RAT) or nucleic acid test) should seize the time and visit any nearby community vaccination centres to get vaccinated immediately under the "same-day tickets" arrangement, via private doctors and clinics offering vaccination service or at mobile vaccination stations. Details on vaccination service can be found on the Government's thematic website for the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme ([www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/en](http://www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/en)), or they can solicit assistance from family and friends, district organisations or elderly service institutions to make enquiry and arrangement.

Meanwhile, the Government continues to conduct large-scale COVID-19 testing for staff of individual sectors under high-risk/high-exposure groups (targeted group persons) in order to cut off transmission chains as quickly as possible and allow normal operation of the relevant industries. The regular compulsory testing of all targeted group persons, whether they have completed a vaccination course or not, must be done by using combined nasal and throat swabs collected by professionals. The arrangement is applicable to all full-time and part-time staff of relevant industries. Given the higher infection risks of targeted group persons, only those who have tested positive in the past month (including positive cases tested either by nucleic acid tests recorded by the Department of Health (DH) or by RATs that have been self-declared to the DH) can be temporarily exempted from undergoing the above regular nucleic acid compulsory testing.

In general, only targeted group persons who are vaccinated or those who are unfit for vaccination because of health reasons are eligible for receiving free COVID-19 testing at CTCs. They must present valid medical certificates/vaccination records/documents of identity proof (see Notes) for receiving free tests. In other words, persons of targeted groups will need to pay \$240 for the regular testing service if they do not fall under the

category of being unfit for vaccination because of health reasons. The specific requirements for eligible persons of various targeted groups (including testing frequency, specimen requirement, conditions for receiving free test) are set out in the Annex.

A spokesman for the FHB said, "As the implementation of stage three Vaccine Pass will be advanced to start on May 31, all eligible citizens (except certain special groups like recovered persons) should get vaccinated with three doses before the deadline. The Government will also consider updating the vaccination requirements of targeted group persons in accordance with the implementation timetable of Vaccine Pass. In other words, the Government is considering that with effect from May 31, only targeted group persons vaccinated with three doses will not be required to undergo regular or such frequent testing. Details will be announced later."

Moreover, the CTCs continue to provide free voluntary nucleic acid testing service for staff members of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes who are fully vaccinated (can receive a free nucleic acid test every seven days on a voluntary basis) and personnel working in public markets and licensed hawkers (can receive a free nucleic acid test every 28 days on a voluntary basis).

The free testing arrangement will be available until further notice. The specific requirements for eligible persons of various targeted groups (including testing frequency, specimen requirement, conditions for receiving free test) will be uploaded on the [COVID-19 thematic website](#) for reference. Persons concerned should also refer to the announcements made by relevant bureaux/departments regarding the latest testing frequencies and corresponding requirements of their targeted groups so as to ensure that they have undergone the testing in compliance with the requirements.

Notes:

(i) Persons who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination because of health reasons are required to present a relevant medical certificate;

(ii) persons who are vaccinated (i.e. have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, or received the second dose but have not yet passed 14 days, or completed a vaccination course of two doses) should present a relevant vaccination record (such as by downloading their electronic vaccination records or saving the printouts of their vaccination records to their mobile phones, or bringing along the printouts or copies of their vaccination records); and

(iii) certain groups should also present card/letter/document proof issued by relevant organisations for verification of identity.

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## Government makes "restriction-testing declaration" and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Tung On House, Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau

The Government today (April 30) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 3pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Ap Lei Chau (i.e. Tung On House, Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau, excluding social service unit and car park thereat, see Annex.) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at around 12noon tomorrow (May 1). The operation may be extended depending on test results.

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. Having reviewed a basket of factors, including the viral load in sewage, the information of relevant positive cases, and other circumstantial factors, and conducted a risk assessment, the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 9pm today. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will make arrangement to facilitate specimen collection for people with impaired mobility. All persons in the "restricted area" who have tested positive in the past three months, including positive cases identified either by nucleic acid tests recorded by the Department of Health (DH) or by rapid antigen tests that have been self-declared to the DH, will not be required to undergo testing in this compulsory testing exercise.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons

subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 12noon tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

According to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any persons other than those specified above who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from April 24 to 30, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before May 2, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

For the 2022 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) candidates who are within the "restricted area" and need to sit the HKDSE examination on the following day, or examination personnel who need to take up invigilation duties for HKDSE on the following day, the Government appeals to them to go to the temporary specimen collection stations setup within the "restricted area" before 8pm today and present to the prescribed officer the relevant documents (including the identification documents and HKDSE admission forms, or a certification letter issued by the school of the examination personnel) proving their identities. These HKDSE candidates and examination personnel will be given priority testing with a view to enabling them to obtain test results on the following day as early as possible. The priority testing arrangement also applies to the family members who live together with these HKDSE candidates and examination personnel, so as to identify those HKDSE candidates and examination personnel who have become close contacts of confirmed cases for making quarantine arrangement.

If any HKDSE candidate or examination personnel needs to leave the "restricted area" for the examination centre before the declaration is revoked, he/she can make a request to the prescribed officers within the "restricted area". The prescribed officer may allow the candidate or the examination personnel to leave the "restricted area" after verifying his/her testing result(s) and recording the relevant information. For the safety of all candidates and examination personnel, only those candidates and examination personnel who have obtained negative test results will be allowed to enter the examination hall. For details, please read the relevant information issued by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority earlier

[www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/PPT\\_2022DSE\\_compulsory\\_testing\\_arrangements\\_eng.pdf](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/PPT_2022DSE_compulsory_testing_arrangements_eng.pdf).

The Government will provide food packs for persons subject to compulsory testing, so as to facilitate the meal arrangement needs of some persons subject to compulsory testing. The Innovation and Technology Bureau has set up a hotline (Tel: 6040 6392) which started operation at 3pm today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$10,000. 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.

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## **Government announces latest situation of fresh food supply from Mainland**

A Government spokesman announced today (April 30) that the supply of fresh food from the Mainland yesterday (April 29) was sufficient and stable.

According to the latest information, the quantity of vegetables supplied from the Mainland to Hong Kong yesterday (as of midnight) by land and water transportation was over 2 500 tonnes, comparable to the average daily supply from the Mainland on a normal day. The volume of vegetables supplied from the Mainland to Hong Kong sold through the wholesale markets of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Vegetable Marketing Organization was about 785 tonnes. The average wholesale prices of choi sum and pak choi stood at \$6.80 and \$5.20 per catty respectively yesterday, largely comparable to the levels of a normal day. The supply of eggs to the wholesale market remained steady, with the average daily supply standing at about 3.5 million for the past week, largely comparable to the average daily supply on a normal day last year.

The total supply of chilled meat from the Mainland yesterday was about 39 tonnes. The supply of live pigs was plentiful.

The supply of chilled poultry from the Mainland was about 160 000 head yesterday, and about 10 000 live chickens were slaughtered locally. The supply was abundant.

Regarding the rice supply, in compliance with the requirement by the Government, stockholders of rice have to maintain the reserve stock of rice at a level sufficient for consumption by the local population for 15 days. The trade generally stocks double the required amount, which is sufficient for one month's consumption by Hong Kong citizens. In recent years, the import and consumption of rice in Hong Kong has stood at a steady level of around 320 000 to 330 000 tonnes per year. The import quantity (including reserve stock) as of end-March 2022 was 27 300 tonnes. Suppliers also maintain a reserve for food that can be stored, such as frozen meat, for around three months' stock generally.

The Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities and major food suppliers to ensure a stable food supply.

The AFCD updates and publishes the fresh food supply information daily. Members of the public may visit the AFCD website for updates on daily supplies and wholesale prices of fresh food ([www.afcd.gov.hk/english/agriculture/agr\\_fresh/agr\\_fresh.html](http://www.afcd.gov.hk/english/agriculture/agr_fresh/agr_fresh.html)).

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## **Government follows up on positive results of sewage surveillance and appeals to residents to undergo virus testing**

The Government announced today (April 30) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department in collaboration with the cross-disciplinary team of the University of Hong Kong had strengthened the sampling of sewage for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in many areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

### Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads in the following areas, the Housing Department and the respective District Offices will commence distributing about 215 000 sets of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to residents, cleaning workers and property management staff working in the following areas for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identify infected persons:

- Sai Kung District – Tsui Lam Estate, Lakeside Garden and Tui Min Hoi Chuen

- Sham Shui Po District – Pak Tin Estate and Chak On Estate
- Sha Tin District – Shui Chuen O Estate

Members of the public may refer to ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html)) for enquiries relating to the use of the RAT kits.

When using an RAT kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. After completing the test, wrap and seal all components of the test kit carefully and dispose properly. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

People who obtained a positive result through an RAT for the first time can report via the online platform "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test" ([www.chp.gov.hk/ratp/](http://www.chp.gov.hk/ratp/)). If individuals encounter difficulties using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document and telephone number. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will contact the relevant person later to finish the report procedure.

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## **SFH expresses gratitude to Mainland team for supporting slaughterhouse operation in Hong Kong (with photos)**

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, joined by Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Mr He Jing and Deputy Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene Miss Diane Wong, at the Shenzhen Bay Port today (April 30), saw off some members of the Mainland professional and skilled butchery personnel deployed to Hong Kong earlier to assist in the operation of the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH).

In view of the manpower shortage at the SSSH due to the severity of the fifth wave of the epidemic earlier, a team of 38 personnel was deployed from the Mainland, and arrived in Hong Kong on March 2 to assist in the operation of the SSSH, with a view to stabilising the supply of fresh meat in Hong Kong. Members of the team have been subject to closed-loop management during their stay to minimise the infection risk.

"We thank the Central Government for the staunch support to Hong Kong in fighting the epidemic, and for their proactive facilitation in stabilising the supply of fresh produce in Hong Kong. We are particularly grateful for the assistance of the team over the past two months. With their support, the SSSH has been operating smoothly and the supply of fresh meat is now plentiful," Professor Chan said.

Twenty-four members of the team departed Hong Kong via the Shenzhen Bay Port today. The remaining 14 members will continue to stay in Hong Kong to assist in the operation of the SSSH.

