

Red flags hoisted at some beaches

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (June 10) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach and Shek O Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Scientific Committees under CHP update interim recommendations related to COVID-19 vaccination and quarantine requirements for vaccinated inbound travellers and vaccinated close contacts

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (JSC) convened a meeting today (June 9), joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP), to discuss interim recommendations related to the interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines, eligible age groups for receiving the Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine, the use of COVID-19 vaccines for elderly, and quarantine requirement for vaccinated inbound travellers and vaccinated close contacts.

During the meeting, the JSC-EAP discussed the use of different types of COVID-19 vaccines for the first and second dose. It was noted that current evidence on the interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines are limited and further studies on the interchangeability of COVID-19 vaccines involving different vaccine types are underway. There are no safety concerns reported so far for mixing viral vector vaccine with mRNA vaccine. Preliminary evidence showed that mixing viral vector vaccine with mRNA vaccine may be more reactogenic than without mixing schedule. The reactogenicity symptoms reported were short-lived. Members of the public are advised to complete both doses of the series with the same product when possible. In exceptional

situations where the vaccine recipient is unable to complete the series with the same type of vaccine (e.g. due to anaphylaxis after the first dose; or if the vaccine is no longer available or accessible), vaccination with another COVID-19 vaccine may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Noting the Government's recent approval of lowering of the age limit for receiving the Comirnaty vaccine to age 12, the JSC-EAP agreed that the Comirnaty vaccine has a high efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19 disease. Vaccination will be important to protect adolescents against symptomatic COVID-19 disease and to reduce community transmission, as well as to increase the overall community immunity. The JSC-EAP also noted that there were overseas reports of mild myocarditis/pericarditis following vaccination with Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine, and the probability on a possible link between the second dose and the onset of myocarditis among young adults. There is a need to continue monitoring ongoing studies on this possible link. Considering the benefits of Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine in reducing deaths and hospitalisations due to COVID-19 infections outweigh the risks, the JSC-EAP recommended the use of Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine for adolescents aged 12 – 15.

In addition, the JSC-EAP highly recommended COVID-19 vaccines for the elderly as they are the group with highest risk of complication and death from COVID-19 disease. Inactivated vaccines, e.g. influenza vaccines, which have been used in elderly for a long time, successfully prevent influenza complications and outbreaks in residential care homes for the elderly. Any elderlies who have received influenza vaccines before can safely receive COVID-19 vaccines. For the frailest elderlies, the benefit versus risk may have to be carefully weighed.

During the meeting, the JSC-EAP has reviewed the criteria concerning the quarantine arrangement for fully vaccinated inbound travellers and made recommendations based on the prevailing scientific evidence on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines. The duration of compulsory quarantine for inbound travellers could be shortened to 7 days of quarantine at a designated place plus 7 days of self-monitoring with multiple polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing, provided that the following three criteria have been satisfied:

- (a) Documented proof of completion of the full course of recognised COVID-19 vaccines, and 14 days have passed from the date of completing the full course of vaccination; and
- (b) Result of PCR of the respiratory specimen taken on arrival is negative; and
- (c) Positive IgG/total antibody against SARS-CoV-2 spike protein/ surrogate neutralising antibody, conducted in Hong Kong after arrival.

The purpose of checking antibody is to show evidence of response to vaccination. If the serology test is negative, the shortening of quarantine period could not be considered. The serology test should be done in Hong Kong on arrival and is valid for the coming three months. For travellers who have recovered from previous COVID-19 infection, they would be required to receive one dose of COVID-19 vaccine in order to be considered as fully vaccinated. The public is not encouraged to check their antibody level after vaccination.

A negative result or low antibody level may not correlate with lack of protection.

The JSC-EAP also discussed the list of recognised COVID-19 vaccines that would be accepted for consideration of adjusting the quarantine requirement for inbound travellers. Apart from the COVID-19 vaccines already recognised for use in Hong Kong, vaccines on the World Health Organization (WHO) Emergency Use Listing or Pre-qualification lists, vaccines recognised for use by Stringent Regulatory Authorities as designated by WHO or the National Medical Products Administration, as well as vaccines recommended by the JSC-EAP (Sputnik V) would also be accepted.

The same list of recognised COVID-19 vaccines would also be accepted for the consideration of shortening of quarantine period for vaccinated close contacts.

Details of the interim recommendation will be available at the CHP's website www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/24008.html.

Government gazettes compulsory testing notice

The Government exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and published in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, which requires any person who had been present at five specified premises/transport during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

Since an earlier confirmed case with N501Y mutant strain had frequently taken a residents' bus route, relevant persons are required to undergo compulsory testing. Furthermore, since there were outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection and/or influenza-like illness in four schools, and the symptoms of the diseases concerned are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, one school and the specified level of three schools are also covered in the compulsory testing notice today (June 9). Under existing practice, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) will provide schools subject to compulsory testing with stool specimen bottles and deep throat saliva specimen collection packs direct.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are in Annex 1.

Subsequent to the announcement by the CHP on the updated quarantine arrangements of local COVID-19 cases with the N501Y mutant strain, persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant

cases and had been released from the quarantine centres will be subject to compulsory testing on the third, seventh, 12th and 19th day counting from the announcement of the relevant confirmed case by the Department of Health (DH). Relevant persons have to undergo testing on specified dates. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

In accordance with the compulsory testing notice issued earlier, all household members of close contacts are required to undergo compulsory testing. Any person who had lived with a person placed under quarantine pursuant to section 22 of the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) (person under quarantine) in the same residential unit on the date of commencement of quarantine or during the 14 days before that day, and who becomes aware of the quarantine of the person under quarantine when the relevant quarantine has not yet been completed, has to undergo testing within two days of him or her becoming aware that the person under quarantine has been placed under quarantine and report to the Government the result of the test by phone (6275 6901), fax (2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test.

Persons who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notices and hence are not required to undergo compulsory testing. Completion of the vaccination course in general means having received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine 14 days ago.

Currently, there are a total of 21 community testing centres (CTCs) providing testing services for the public, including free service for persons subject to compulsory testing. Booking and walk-in services are available. Members of the public only need to provide simple personal information on the 24-hour booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en). The system shows the booking status of the centres for the coming week to facilitate the public's planning and selection of a suitable testing centre and a time slot for testing. The testing centres will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. The number of tests available for appointments at CTCs has been increased to over 46 000 per day, and additional manpower has been deployed to serve the public. As of 6pm today, there were around 37 000 booking places available for tomorrow (June 10) at the CTCs, and around 87 per cent availability for booking places for the coming seven days. Members of the public may call the testing centres for enquiries on the availability of bookings or walk-in quotas before visiting the centres.

Outdoor mobile specimen collection stations will be closed if the Strong Wind Signal No. 3 or Red Rainstorm Warning Signal is hoisted while all mobile specimen collection stations together with all CTCs will be closed when the No. 8 Gale or Storm Signal or higher, or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is hoisted.

Coupled with the 21 CTCs, there will be a total of 36 CTCs/mobile

specimen collection stations in various districts tomorrow to provide free service for persons subject to compulsory testing. The testing capacity should be sufficient to meet the demand. The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are stated in Annex 2. Persons subject to compulsory testing and those with the "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the CHP reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may receive free testing at CTCs or mobile specimen collection stations (if the service scope is applicable).

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable) at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;
2. To attend any of the CTCs (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en);
3. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the 121 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general outpatient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);
4. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority;
5. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf); or
6. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau cautioned that testing received at the Accident and Emergency Departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notice.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the CTCs."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notifications containing the result of the test for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal

disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the CTCs, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the CTCs are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. 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 order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to the DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purposes as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."

COVID-19 Vaccination Programme statistics

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for 104 days since February 26, 2021.

So far, about 2 748 900 doses of vaccines have been administered under

the Vaccination Programme. Details are as follows:

	Number of persons receiving Sinovac vaccine	Number of persons receiving BioNTech vaccine	Total number of doses
First vaccine dose	705 000	903 400	1 608 400
Second vaccine dose	480 100	660 400	1 140 600

* The numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

In the 24 hours ending at 8pm today (June 9), about 32 800 persons have received vaccination and about 34 300 new vaccination bookings have been made online. Details are as follows:

	Sinovac vaccine	BioNTech vaccine
Number of persons receiving first dose	13 000	11 400
Number of persons receiving second dose	3 700	4 700
Overall percentage of persons receiving vaccines at Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs)	96%	97%
Number of online bookings for receiving first and second vaccine doses	11 900	22 500

* The numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred.

In the 24 hours ending at 0.00am today, there were nine cases of ambulance transfer to hospital from CVCs or designated general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority. They were sent to hospital after experiencing common side effects after vaccination and were in stable condition. Four of them were discharged, four persons were admitted for observation and one person was discharged against medical advice.

[**List of catering premises under Types C and D Modes of Operation uploaded to**](#)

[FEHD's webpage](#)

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (June 9) that a list and location maps of catering premises under Types C and D Modes of Operation under the "Vaccine Bubble" principle have been uploaded to the FEHD's "Vaccine Bubble" thematic webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/events/covid19/vaccine_bubble_premises_disclaimer.html) for the public's reference.

The spokesman said, "Catering premises operators may, after complying with the requirements on staff vaccination stipulated under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), register on the thematic webpage as catering premises under Type C or D Mode of Operation. After collating the information, the FEHD will upload the list containing the names and addresses of the premises to the webpage by districts. The list will be updated from time to time. Members of the public may also browse the maps on the thematic webpage containing the location of respective catering premises according to districts."

In addition, the FEHD will issue advisory letters to the operators of catering premises and bars/pubs, reminding them that in accordance with the latest specification and directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business under Cap. 599F, all catering premises must decide to operate in one of the modes of operation under catering business or in bar/pub upon commencement of the Specified Period or upon the expiry of the period of adopting measures for reducing the risk of transmission (if applicable). All catering businesses may not change from the mode of operation between catering business and bar/pub during the Specified Period, once they have so decided. Bars/pubs must also display a notice with the specifications and content specified under the latest specification and directions round-the-clock at the entrance of its premises during the Specified Period. Templates of the relevant notices can be downloaded at the thematic webpage.

"Operators of catering premises under Type C or D Mode of Operation may also download the respective labels of the modes of operation at the thematic webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/events/covid19/vaccine_bubble_download.html) for displaying at the entrance of the premises for the public's identification," the spokesman supplemented.