

Very Hot Weather Warning issued

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

The Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning.

To prevent heat stroke, avoid prolonged activities outdoors.

If engaged in outdoor work or activities, wear a wide-brimmed hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes. Stay in shaded areas as much as possible.

Drink plenty of water, and avoid beverages containing caffeine or alcohol.

If you feel sick, consult a doctor right away.

Government reminds persons of targeted groups about requirements for free testing at community testing centres

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) announced on May 15 that apart from free COVID-19 testing service provided for persons required to undergo testing as mandated by compulsory testing notices, the Government will also continue to provide free COVID-19 testing service at community testing centres (CTCs) for persons of targeted groups who have yet to complete a COVID-19 vaccination course or are unfit for vaccination because of health reasons.

A spokesman for the FHB reminded today (May 18) that starting next Monday (May 24), construction site personnel and working staff accompanying and receiving local group tours are required to present medical certificate or vaccination record to staff of the CTCs for free testing service. They should get the documents ready as soon as possible if they will continue to undergo regular testing. Those without the required documents will need to pay for the testing service. The Government does not preclude extending this requirement to other targeted groups later.

Currently, persons of targeted groups who have not completed vaccination are generally required to undergo regular testing within 14 or seven days before work, and the specific requirements (including testing frequency,

specimen requirement, etc.) are set out at Annex. In view of the protection brought by the vaccination, the relevant staff member will no longer need to undergo regular testing upon his or her completion of vaccination.

The spokesman reiterated that the two vaccines currently recognised in Hong Kong are safe and effective, and have been received by tens of millions of people worldwide. Getting vaccinated can protect oneself and those around, and is the best way to fight the virus. Most people are fit for vaccination. Currently, all Hong Kong residents aged 16 or above are eligible for receiving free vaccination. The Government calls on the public to treasure the vaccine supply in Hong Kong and get vaccinated as soon as possible.

The following eligible groups may continue to make booking online (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/) for free testing service at the CTCs.

Persons eligible for booking a free test every seven days

â–€ Staff of catering businesses and scheduled premises

â–€ Staff of quarantine hotels

Persons eligible for booking a free test every 14 days

â–€ Construction site personnel (including registered construction workers and other resident site personnel) *

â–€ Staff of public and private swimming pools/beaches

â–€ Staff of specified hotels

Other persons eligible for booking a free test

â–€ Working staff accompanying and receiving local group tours (including tourist guides, tour escorts, staff seeing off the groups, drivers of chartered tour coaches and crew of chartered ferries) *

(within seven days before the tour, and no more than one free test every seven days)

* With effect from May 24, (i) persons who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination because of health reasons are required to present a relevant medical certificate; and (ii) persons who have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine should present 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).

Apart from attending the CTCs for testing, citizens can continue to utilise other free testing channels provided by the Government, including attending mobile specimen collection stations (if service scope is applicable) for free testing. For details on testing means other than the CTCs, please refer to the following

webpage: www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html.

Government further tightens quarantine and testing arrangements for persons arriving from Taiwan and Singapore

The Government announced today (May 18) that considering the epidemic situation in Taiwan and Singapore, it will further tighten the quarantine arrangements for persons who have already arrived at Hong Kong from Taiwan earlier and are under compulsory home quarantine. The compulsory testing arrangements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from Taiwan and Singapore will also be enhanced.

The Government had earlier tightened the boarding, quarantine and testing requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from Taiwan, including requiring from May 16 the relevant persons arriving at Hong Kong to undergo compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels instead of undergoing home quarantine, as well as requiring from May 17 the presentation at boarding a proof of a nucleic acid test negative result for COVID-19 conducted within 72 hours before the scheduled time of departure of the aircraft.

In view of the continued rise of confirmed cases in Taiwan, the involvement of mutant virus strains in confirmed cases there, as well as indications that there had been a considerable number of pre-existing local transmission chains, the Government will arrange for persons who arrived at Hong Kong from Taiwan on or before May 15 and are still undergoing home quarantine to complete the remaining compulsory quarantine periods at the quarantine hotels of the Department of Health as a measure to prevent any such imported case from spreading to the community as far as possible.

At the same time, to reduce as much as possible the risk of the importation of cases from Taiwan and Singapore, the Government will also issue an updated compulsory testing notice under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J), so as to further enhance the compulsory testing arrangements for persons arriving from Taiwan and Singapore upon their completion of compulsory quarantine (whether it is conducted at home or at quarantine hotel) as follows:

1. for relevant persons who were required to undergo compulsory quarantine for 14 days in accordance with the prevailing requirements when they arrived at Hong Kong, they are required to undergo compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th day of their arrival at Hong Kong. There will be a new requirement for them to stay at their place of residence, private premises or the place of quarantine specified on the quarantine order (referred to as "place of stay" below) until the test result from the test conducted on the 19th day is available. If a person subject to testing needs to take public transport for the purpose of undergoing the test or for returning to the person's place of

stay, he or she should only travel direct by taking taxis and not to disembark on the way; and

2. for relevant persons who were required to undergo compulsory quarantine for seven days in accordance with the prevailing requirements when they arrived at Hong Kong because they have completed their vaccination course, they are required to undergo compulsory testing on the 12th day of their arrival at Hong Kong. There will be two new requirements, including (i) they will be required to stay at their place of stay until the test result from the test conducted on the 12th day is available. If a person subject to testing needs to take public transport for the purpose of undergoing the test or for returning to the person's place of stay, he or she should only travel direct by taking taxis and not to disembark on the way; and (ii) they will be subject to further compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th day of their arrival at Hong Kong, but will not be required to remain at their place of stay during that period.

A Government spokesman said, "The Government will continue to closely monitor the epidemic situation of various places, the prevalence of new virus variants, vaccination progress, and changes in the volume of cross-boundary passenger traffic, and will adjust the boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from relevant places as the situation warrants."

[COVID-19 Vaccination Programme statistics](#)

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for the 82nd day since February 26, 2021.

So far, about 2 010 300 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered for members of the public (please see Annex 1). Among them, about 1 193 600 persons have received their first dose, with about 515 100 persons receiving the Sinovac vaccine and about 678 500 persons receiving the BioNTech vaccine. About 816 700 persons have received their second dose, with about 376 900 persons receiving the Sinovac vaccine and about 439 800 persons receiving the BioNTech vaccine.

In the last 24 hours ending at 8pm today (May 18), about 25 900 persons have received vaccination and about 12 200 new vaccination bookings have been made online, detailed as follows:

(i) About 5 200 persons received their first dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 2 600 persons vaccinated at Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) and about 2 700 persons at private doctors and clinics participating in the programme;

(ii) about 4 400 persons received their second dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 2 100 persons vaccinated at CVCs and about 2 300 persons at private doctors and clinics;

(iii) about 7 800 persons received their first dose of the BioNTech vaccine at CVCs, and about 8 400 persons received their second dose of the BioNTech vaccine;

(iv) the overall percentage of people who have received the Sinovac vaccine at CVCs is about 96 per cent; while the overall percentage of people who have received the BioNTech vaccine at CVCs is about 96 per cent; and

(v) about 3 800 persons have made online bookings for receiving their first and second doses of the Sinovac vaccine, while about 8 400 persons have made online bookings for receiving their first and second doses of the BioNTech vaccine.

In the last 24 hours ending at 0.00am today, there were six cases of ambulance transfers to hospitals. Among them, three persons were discharged, one person was admitted for observation and two persons were discharged against medical advice (please see Annex 2).

As background information, in the last 24 hours ending at 0.00am today, there were 61 cases of stroke or myocardial infarction that required admission to the Intensive Care Unit, Acute Stroke Unit and Cardiac Care Unit of public hospitals. The state of new cases admitted to the wards concerned is provided as a cross reference to enhance fuller public understanding of cases of the kind recorded on vaccine recipients.

Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation assesses serious adverse events relating to COVID-19 vaccination

The Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation (Expert Committee) convened a meeting today (May 18) to assess serious adverse events relating to COVID-19 vaccination.

The Department of Health (DH) has put in place a pharmacovigilance system for COVID-19 immunisations, including receiving reports of Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFIs) related to the COVID-19 vaccines used in Hong Kong from healthcare professionals and pharmaceutical industries, and

setting up the Expert Committee to provide independent assessment on the potential causal link between AEFIs and COVID-19 vaccination. The DH is also partnering with the University of Hong Kong (HKU) to conduct an active surveillance programme for Adverse Events of Special Interest under the COVID-19 Vaccines Adverse Events Response and Evaluation Programme (CARE Programme). The main purpose of the pharmacovigilance system is to detect potential signals of possible side effects of the vaccines.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an AEFI is any medical occurrence that follows immunisation and that does not necessarily have a causal relationship with the usage of the vaccine. As endorsed by the Expert Committee, when there are obvious medical causes for certain clinical events including death cases or the events have exceeded the reporting time frame, the healthcare professionals may consider the events not fulfilling the criteria for reporting as AEFIs. On the other hand, under the CARE Programme, death cases not fulfilling reporting criteria of AEFIs are referred to HKU for surveillance and analysis. According to the risk communication plan endorsed by the Expert Committee, figures and summary of clinical events received will be released and updated through the designated website biweekly. When suspected adverse event fulfilling the reporting criteria of AEFIs involving death case within 14 days of vaccination is received, it will be announced as soon as possible. An updated report (as at May 16) will be uploaded on May 21.

Between May 3 and May 16, 2021, the DH had received four death reports with history of COVID-19 immunisation within 14 days from the Hospital Authority (HA). These cases involved three males and one female aged from 46 to 61 years old (Annex). All the reports did not have clinical evidence to support the events were caused by vaccine. The Expert Committee assessed these four death cases in today's meeting and preliminarily considered that the cases were not associated with vaccination. In addition, the DH had also received two death reports with history of COVID-19 immunisation more than 14 days. Both cases exceeded the reporting timeframe for AEFI and would be referred to HKU for analysis under the CARE Programme. Based on autopsy findings, the Expert Committee concluded that they were not associated with vaccination.

As of May 16, a total of 11 825 persons had been infected with COVID-19 and 210 had died of the disease in Hong Kong. Separately, about 1.96 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered for members of the public in Hong Kong. Around 1.16 million people had received at least one dose of a vaccine. In the same period, the DH received about 2 890 reports of adverse events (0.15 per cent of total vaccine doses administered), including 20 death cases with vaccination within 14 days before they passed away (0.001 per cent of total vaccine doses administered). The Expert Committee concluded that five cases had no causal relationship with COVID-19 vaccination and preliminarily considered that 15 cases were not associated with vaccination. The Expert Committee considered there is no unusual pattern identified so far, and it will continue to closely monitor the situation and further collect more data for assessment.

According to the local mortality data, in the period between February 26 and May 16 of 2019, among people aged 40 or above, there were 820 deaths (i.e. 19.2 per 100 000 population) and 1 400 deaths (i.e. 32.8 per 100 000 population) due to ischaemic heart diseases and heart disease respectively. In addition, according to information from the HA, during the period from April 12 to May 9 of 2021, the ratio of death cases out of those without a vaccination record was 54.1 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases for those with a vaccination record was 2.6 cases for every 100 000 people. The overall death rate is similar to that recorded in the past three years. Based on the statistical analysis of the above figures, there is no evidence that vaccination increases the risk of death for recipients.

Between May 3 and May 16, 2021, the DH had received 20 reports of suspected Bell's palsy with history of COVID-19 vaccination. These cases involved 10 males and 10 females between 24 and 80 years old. Six of these cases received CoronaVac vaccine and 14 received Comirnaty vaccine. The Expert Committee reviewed available clinical data of these cases and considered that 11 cases required further clinical information before the assessment could be concluded.

Bell's palsy (acute peripheral facial paralysis) is a common neurologic disorder. Majority of the patients will have complete recovery even without treatment and early use of a short course of treatment within 3 days of symptoms onset will further enhance the recovery rate. According to the preliminary information collected by the HKU from HA, for people of 16-year-old or above, there were on average 64.3 new cases of Bell's palsy recorded in the period from May 3 to May 16 of 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The two COVID-19 vaccines authorised for use in Hong Kong have been rigorously evaluated by the Advisory Panel on COVID-19 Vaccines established under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Use of Vaccines) Regulation (Cap. 599K) that they are safe, effective and of good quality. Current scientific evidence indicates that the benefits of the two COVID-19 vaccines outweigh their risks for use as active immunisation to prevent COVID-19. The surveillance system put in place by the DH aims at identifying potential signals that may indicate association between unknown adverse events and the vaccines. If a signal is identified and confirmed, appropriate regulatory measures would be instituted.