

CHP investigates two additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, May 2, the CHP was investigating two additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 785 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 784 confirmed cases and one probable case).

All newly reported cases are imported cases.

A total of 129 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (April 18 to May 1), including 21 local cases (including one possibly local) of which nine are from unknown sources.

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 or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

As a passenger flight (TK083) operated by Turkish Airlines arriving from Istanbul of Turkey to Hong Kong on April 27, 2021, had three passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival test, the DH thus invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit landing of passenger flights from Istanbul of Turkey operated by Turkish Airlines in Hong Kong from May 3 to 16, 2021.

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive COVID-19 nucleic acid testing according to the compulsory testing notice. The Regulation also requires all household members of close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test within a specified period according to compulsory testing notices published in the Gazette. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop and undergo testing as soon as possible.

The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk).

The CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks

such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a 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). After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, 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 performing 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 doorknobs, 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 litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- 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.
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HAD sets up temporary mobile specimen collection station in Tung Chung

In view of the surge in testing demand from Tung Chung residents in the district within a short period of time, the Home Affairs Department has commissioned the China Inspection Medical Laboratories Limited to set up a small-scaled temporary mobile specimen collection station at Tat Tung Road Garden in Tung Chung today (May 2) to provide services for residents subject to compulsory testing.

The temporary mobile specimen collection station at Tat Tung Road Garden will operate from 2pm to 8pm today. About 540 quotas will be provided on a first-come-first-served basis.

FHB thanks the public for co-operation in compulsory testing

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) thanked the general public for their co-operation in undergoing compulsory testing for fighting the virus together on May 1.

The Government has been adopting the new direction for fighting the pandemic since mid-April. Targeted border control and infection control measures were introduced to safeguard Hong Kong against imported cases and prevent cases from spreading locally.

The spokesman said, "For local cases with unknown sources of infection involving mutant strains, the Government has to be decisive in adopting swiftly stringent testing and quarantine measures, with an aim to cutting the transmission chains as soon as possible. Otherwise, the whole society will have to bear significant consequence when there is a major outbreak."

Testing has been an integral part of the strategy in preventing and

fighting the virus. The Government has been implementing the Targeted Group Testing Scheme for high-risk and high-exposure groups and essential staff of critical infrastructure and services, etc since mid-2020. Around 3.4 million tests have been conducted so far. Among them, all foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) were offered a one-off free test on a voluntary basis at community testing centres (CTCs) from mid-December 2020 to end February this year. Over 34 000 FDHs, equivalent to less than 10 per cent of the total number of FDHs in Hong Kong, had received voluntary testing at CTCs during the period. Under the new direction for fighting the pandemic, high-risk or high-exposure groups such as staff members of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes, as well as most of the frontline staff of catering businesses, are required to undergo regular testing if they have not completed a COVID-19 vaccination course.

"The Government requested on April 30 that all FDHs in Hong Kong who had yet to complete a COVID-19 vaccination course to receive testing on a compulsory basis on or before May 9. In accordance with the established practice, the relevant decision was made solely on public health grounds after detailed risk assessment. The factors that have been taken into account include that two recent cases involving N501Y mutant strain were FDHs, the transmissibility of mutant strains is higher, the sources of infection of the cases were not known, and that the confirmed case had gatherings and contacts with other FDHs during the incubation and infection periods, etc.

"Although the sheer number of FDHs in Hong Kong would impose challenges to the local testing capacity in the short term, we need to keep up our efforts in testing high-risk, high-exposure and high transmissibility risk groups in order to cut the latent transmission chains in the community as early as possible. The Government would like to express gratitude to all those who received test today, including FDHs, for their patience and understanding. The Government will enhance testing capacity in the coming few days to enable the public to receive testing. We also encourage them to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their family members."

Those who completed a COVID-19 vaccination course would be taken as having complied with the requirements in the compulsory testing notices. They would also be exempted from regular testing. 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. It is the best way to fight the virus. Most people are fit for getting vaccinated.

"In view of the threat posed by the mutant strains, it is imperative for us to get vaccinated. While there is still shortage in COVID-19 vaccines internationally, the two vaccines procured by the Government are sufficient for all Hong Kong people to get vaccinated. At present, there are still plenty of unutilized quotas in the 29 community vaccination centres and over 1000 private clinics. We call on the public to treasure the vaccine supply in Hong Kong and get vaccinated as soon as possible."

The Government reminds persons subject to compulsory testing, including FDHs, that they may choose to undergo COVID-19 virus 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 community testing centres (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 (HA) 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 Department of Health (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 Centre for Health Protection (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

Currently, there are a total of 21 community testing centres providing testing service for the public, including free service for persons subject to compulsory testing. The number of tests available for appointments at community testing centres has been increased to over 38 000 per day, and additional manpower has been deployed to serve the public. As of 6pm today, there are more than 40 000 booking places available for the next eight days (May 2 to 9) at the 21 community testing centres. 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). Booking status of centres for the coming week will be shown for public's selection of suitable testing centre and time slot for testing. The testing centres will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. Members of the public may call the testing centres for enquiries on the availability of bookings or walk-in quotas before visiting the centres.

In view of the surge in testing demand within a short period of time, the Government has set up 18 new mobile specimen collection stations in a number of districts today, bringing the total number of stations to 35. The Government will add one more station for FDHs at Kowloon Park tomorrow (May 2), and extend the operating hours of the stations set up by the Labour Department and the Food and Health Bureau at four popular gathering places of FDHs to 8pm to further enable FDHs to undergo testing. Coupled with the 21 community testing centres, there will be a total of 57 community testing centres/mobile specimen collection stations in various districts tomorrow to provide free service for persons subject to compulsory testing. Among them, 55 stations are open to FDHs for free testing. 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.

In addition, persons subject to compulsory testing can obtain deep throat saliva specimen collection packs at designated hours at 47 HA GOPCs, 121 post offices or vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations for free on a first-come-first-served basis while stocks last; and return their specimens to the 47 HA GOPCs, 13 designated clinics of the DH or 23 specimen collection points at Government premises. Over the past few weeks, the Government has distributed an average of some 30 000 to 40 000 specimen collection packs daily, and the average number of specimen bottles collected per day was less than 20 000, which is around half of the amount distributed. The Government appealed to the public and organisations again to refrain from collecting excessive sets of packs so that others in need can also obtain specimen collection packs for testing. The Government will also continue to review the usage and public demand for the testing service, and make suitable adjustments to the relevant service.

LWB response to the requirement for foreign domestic helpers to receive compulsory testing and vaccination arrangement

In response to the community's concerns over the requirement for foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) to receive compulsory testing for COVID-19 and the vaccination arrangement, the Labour and Welfare Bureau today (May 1) made further explanations on the relevant arrangements.

In view of recent incidents of FDHs confirmed with infection of COVID-19 with the N501Y mutant strain, the Government announced yesterday (April 30) that all FDHs working in Hong Kong should receive compulsory testing in the period from May 1 to May 9. Given that the source of infection is unknown, it indicates that there may already be silent transmission chains of the mutant strain in the community. The compulsory testing is an important risk-based measure adopted by the health authorities in view of the evolving situation of the pandemic and is supported by public health experts. The FDH population is significant at about 370 000. Their job mainly involves taking care of family members, including the elderly and children, etc. If an FDH is infected with the virus, the employer's family members may be infected. In addition, as FDHs have regular social gatherings, coupled with the high transmissibility of the N501Y mutant strain, any infection involving FDHs might result in cross-household infections. Hence, it is necessary for the

Government to mandate all FDHs to receive testing in order to completely cut any possible transmission chains in the community. Compulsory testing also applies to persons in other high-risk industries, such as staff of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes. There is no discrimination on race or status.

The Government appeals to all FDHs to receive vaccination as soon as possible in order to protect their own health and that of their employers' family and others, and to avoid being subject to any regular testing in the future. Employers should encourage and assist FDHs to receive vaccination, such as allowing sufficient rest for FDHs after receiving vaccination.

Regarding the arrangement of requiring FDHs to receive recognised vaccines when applying for contract renewal in the future, the Labour Department and the Immigration Department are working out the relevant details. If an FDH chooses to work in Hong Kong, he/she may receive the vaccination. If an FDH is unable to receive vaccination due to health reasons, he/she may be considered for exemption from the relevant requirement. As regards the medical expenses of FDHs, the employer's responsibility is the same as that under the existing regulation. According to Clause 9(a) of the Standard Employment Contract, in the event that the FDH is ill or suffers personal injury during the period of employment (except for the period during which the FDH leaves Hong Kong of his or her own volition and for his or her own personal purposes), the employer shall provide free medical treatment. Under the prevailing policy, eligible FDHs enjoy public healthcare services at a highly-subsidised rate by the Government. In addition, under the Indemnity Fund for Adverse Events Following Immunization with COVID-19 Vaccines, an FDH could, same as other Hong Kong people, apply for financial support from the indemnity fund if he/she suffers unexpected serious adverse events associated with the vaccine. The relevant departments will make an announcement after confirming the details for the above arrangements.

The Government thanks all FDHs and their employers in Hong Kong for their understanding and co-operation with the anti-epidemic measures.

COVID-19 Vaccination Programme statistics

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for the 65th day since February 26, 2021.

So far, about 1 454 400 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered for members of the public (please see Annex 1). Among them,

about 936 400 persons have received their first dose, with about 434 800 persons receiving the Sinovac vaccine and about 501 600 persons receiving the BioNTech vaccine. About 518 000 persons have received their second dose, with about 315 500 persons receiving the Sinovac vaccine and about 202 500 persons receiving the BioNTech vaccine.

In the last 24 hours ending at 8pm today (May 1), about 40 600 persons have received vaccination and about 32 600 new vaccination bookings have been made online, detailed as follows:

(i) About 4 500 persons received their first dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 3 800 persons vaccinated at Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) and about 700 persons at private doctors and clinics participating in the programme;

(ii) about 4 800 persons received their second dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 4 500 persons vaccinated at CVCs and about 300 persons at private doctors and clinics;

(iii) about 15 500 persons received their first dose of the BioNTech vaccine at CVCs, and about 15 700 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 97 per cent; while the overall percentage of people who have received the BioNTech vaccine at CVCs is about 97 per cent; and

(v) about 6 300 persons have made online bookings for receiving their first and second doses of the Sinovac vaccine, while about 26 400 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 11 cases of ambulance transfers to hospitals. Among them, eight persons were discharged, two persons were admitted for observation and one person was discharged against medical advice (please see Annex 2).

As background information, in the last 24 hours ending at 0.00am today, there were 42 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.