

COVID-19 Vaccination Programme statistics

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has been implemented for the 46th day since February 26, 2021.

So far, about 877 900 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered for members of the public (please see Annex 1). Among them, about 597 400 persons have received their first dose, with about 351 800 persons receiving the Sinovac vaccine and about 245 600 persons receiving the BioNTech vaccine. About 280 500 persons have received their second dose, with about 156 100 persons receiving the Sinovac vaccine and about 124 400 persons receiving the BioNTech vaccine.

In the last 24 hours ending at 8pm today (April 12), about 43 000 persons have received vaccination and about 16 800 new vaccination bookings have been made online, detailed as follows:

- (i) About 3 100 persons received their first dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 1 400 persons vaccinated at eight Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) and about 1 700 persons at private doctors and clinics participating in the programme;
- (ii) about 9 500 persons received their second dose of the Sinovac vaccine, including about 6 500 persons vaccinated at the CVCs and about 3 000 persons at private doctors and clinics;
- (iii) about 15 300 persons received their first dose of the BioNTech vaccine at 21 CVCs, and about 15 100 persons received their second dose of the BioNTech vaccine;
- (iv) the overall percentage of people who have received the Sinovac vaccine at the eight CVCs is about 97 per cent; while the overall percentage of people who have received the BioNTech vaccine at the 21 CVCs is about 96 per cent; and
- (v) about 3 300 persons have made online bookings for receiving their first and second doses of the Sinovac vaccine, while about 13 500 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 10 cases of ambulance transfers to hospitals. Among them, six persons were discharged, three 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 45 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.

Transcript of remarks of press conference (with photos/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference this afternoon (Apr 12). Also joining were the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan; and the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference.

Reporter: First, when do you expect this sort of vaccine bubbles can be launched and are you looking to launch it right after this batch of measures expired or are you hoping to see the vaccination rate reach a certain level? And when the vaccination is not fully available to all people in Hong Kong, for example those under 30, is it fair to those who aren't qualified or physically can't get a vaccine to launch this measure when they can't get a vaccine? Will you guys also see this as sort of a mandatory vaccination drive? Second question regarding the quarantine-free travels from the Mainland to Hong Kong, looking forward at the quotas, what range of amount are we looking at and would these quotas be reserved for business travels only, or emergency travels or there are no limitations? And third batch of questions regarding travel bubble arrangements, has the Government made any progress on those areas especially with travel bubble arrangements with Macao and Singapore and what are your progress on the vaccine passports for Hong Kong so far? Thanks.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the questions. First of all, as far as the vaccine bubble, the way to put it is we are making use of vaccination as a basis for adjusting the social distancing measures as well as the border control measures. We do not need to wait until a certain percentage of Hong Kong population has received vaccination. This vaccine bubble is very much based on the individual behaviour or the group of individuals or the venue-based group of individuals. If you have been vaccinated and all the staff in the restaurant have been vaccinated, then they can enjoy the relaxed measures in terms of the number of customers per table and the operating hours. We do not need to wait until everybody or a certain percentage of the Hong Kong people have been vaccinated, so the concept is very different. The latter that you asked about a certain percentage is what they call the "herd immunity". We are not adopting a herd immunity concept for adjusting the relaxation measures. We are just targeting at individuals. If you do that, or

a group of individuals, if you do that, for example if a family of eight persons want to enjoy the dinner together, sitting around a table, then this group of eight individuals, they have all to be vaccinated. That's how we are going about this.

At the moment we have no plan to make vaccination compulsory. I doubt any places will adopt this route because there are all sorts of complications and reasons but I have been convinced – you remember previously I said that the best incentive is to protect yourself and your family – if the community wants the Government to come up with more tangible benefits, so-called incentives, what I have announced today is in that direction. It is true that at the moment the Government Vaccination Programme does not extend to people under 30. I have said that we will seriously consider that because we do have the supply of vaccines but we need to wait for the experts to advise us. We are not denying the under-30s to have a meal in a restaurant, we are just talking about the relaxation. They can still go to cinema. We are not making cinema-goers all vaccinated and so on. This is really striking a balance between, on the one hand, promoting vaccination but on the other hand, also giving people the choices in their daily activities.

For the scheme to allow Mainlanders or people in the Mainland to come to Hong Kong without being subject to the 14-day quarantine arrangement, we will not specify what type of travellers. But they have all to get the quota from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government's scheme, and they will have to have negative COVID-19 test results, then they can come. Within the Mainland, especially for Mainlanders, they have to get all sorts of permits to arrive, whether it is a one-way permit for a family reunion, a business permit for business visit, or an official permit for official visit, but that's not under our scheme, that is really the exit arrangement for Mainlanders. The quota is going to be determined by us, and we hope to be able to tell people this quota once we get the scheme ready for implementation.

For the travel bubble arrangement progress, at the moment, it's only with Singapore because we did have a scheme very much ready for implementation with Singapore before the fourth wave hit us in the latter part of November. I understand that the Commissioner for Tourism has had very good discussions with the Singaporean government and I hope to be able to announce some details very soon.

Reporter: ...when can the vaccine bubbles begin...?

Chief Executive: I have announced that the set of social distancing measures that is in place, which will expire on Thursday (April 15) will be extended for two weeks up to April 28. If all the preparatory work, discussions with stakeholders could be completed well within this two-week period, then they can start to kick in in the next round of these measures. That's our target. I hope that at least, especially to operators of the six types of premises which have been closed really for a very long period, this will give them some encouragement that they can start to get themselves prepared. But I have to put down a rider, if suddenly Hong Kong faces a major surge of COVID-19

cases as a result of the Easter holiday, then we may need to again revisit and refine these measures.

Reporter: Good afternoon, Mrs Lam and other ministers. Few questions from us. How will the "clean zones" work in restaurants, where space can be cramped, and where there is also risk of aerial transmission, which we saw in previous restaurant clusters? Second question is when are the 300,000 doses of BioNTech from Baxter expected to be used up based on the current vaccination rate? Will a new batch be shipped, given that the two suspended ones are still in storage? And how will those two batches be handled? And third, I'd just like to clarify when the relaxation of quarantine requirements for low- and medium-risk countries will take effect. Thank you.

Chief Executive: As far as the details on how individual types of premises will operate under this "vaccine bubble" concept, it will have to be worked out between the Government and the trade in the next few days. But I would envisage that, for example, for a more sizeable restaurant, then they could delineate a certain area within their restaurant as what we call the "clean zone". For customers who want to go into this area and enjoy eight persons table, then they have to be vaccinated, and the staff serving this area, this delineated area, have all to be vaccinated. It much depends on the configuration and the size of a particular restaurant. Some restaurants actually have two floors – then it's quite easy for them to make this delineation.

I will leave the second question to the Secretary for Food and Health and the Director of Health about the supply of BioNTech and so on.

As far as the low- and medium-risk countries, the low-risk countries – that is Singapore, New Zealand and Australia – have already started with a 14-day quarantine instead of 21-day quarantine from April 9, so in due course when we announce this further relaxation based on vaccination, then these three low-risk countries will move on to seven-day instead of 14-day quarantine. I cannot tell you the exact day, we have to work out some of the details. For the medium-risk countries, at the moment, still 21-day quarantine. Again, in due course we will announce that from a day onwards, if you come from these countries, normally we will expect these are the countries that have not had these variants of concern, and from that point onwards they will be subject to 14-day instead of a 21-day quarantine. I want to assure you that we will remain equally vigilant even with the reduced quarantine period by imposing more tests. At the moment it's upon arrival, there is a "test-and-hold" at the airport, and then on the 12th day, on the 19th day. We may adjust the frequency of the tests based on the advice of the experts. I actually met the experts for two hours last Friday and they have given some good advice on how we could adjust these testing frequencies in order to make sure that while on the one hand we reduce the duration of the quarantine, on the other hand we will not leak any of those possible variants into the community.

Secretary for Food and Health: Thank you for your question. As far as the supply of BioNTech vaccines is concerned, you may recall earlier we have

received 300 000 doses from Germany. We will be receiving further doses, so there should not be any problem with the supply. Of course we are monitoring the situation very closely because of the challenges on logistics and storage that we are facing. Again, I do not think there is any problem so far with the storage as far as there are planning and arrangements on further delivery of another batch of BioNTech (vaccines).

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)



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 four specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

One residential building and three schools are included in the compulsory testing notice today (April 12). Among them, Block B, Phase III, Kwan Yick Building, 271-285 Des Voeux Road West, Sai Ying Pun was included in the compulsory testing notice on March 31, 2021. As it is possible that the incubation period of the virus could be long, the relevant persons have to undergo a second test. Also, since a positive case was found at a secondary school, staff, students and visitors attending the school have to undergo compulsory testing.

In addition, since there were outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) in a day creche and a kindergarten-cum-nursery, and the symptoms of URTI are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, the two schools are also covered in the compulsory testing notice.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are as follows:

1. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part A of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 18 to April 12, 2021 (including but not limited to residents, visitors and workers), has to undergo testing by April 14, 2021.

2. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part B of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 30 to April 12, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff, students and visitors), have to undergo testing by April 14, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing who had been present at the second and the third specified premises listed in Part B choose to undergo testing using the specimen bottles distributed by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), they have to return the specimen bottle with the sample by April 16, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between April 10 and April 12, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau reminded the public that 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 (at 6275 6901), fax (at 2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test.

The Government will set up mobile specimen collection stations at the following locations tomorrow (April 13) for persons subject to compulsory testing:

- Phase III, Kwan Yick Building, Sai Ying Pun
- Shun Tak Fraternal Association Tam Pak Yu College, Tuen Mun

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. Apart from mobile specimen collection stations, persons subject to compulsory testing can also choose to attend any of the community testing centres across the territory to receive testing free of charge. Persons with "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the Centre for Health Protection reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may receive free testing at community testing centres 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 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 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 CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

The spokesman cautioned that testing received at 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 community testing centres."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notification 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 community testing centres, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the community testing centres 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."

HAD investigates suspected violations of anti-epidemic regulation at Hong Kong Scout Centre

The Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) in the Home Affairs Department (HAD) today (April 12) conducted a joint investigation with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department for suspected violations of anti-epidemic requirements at Hong Kong Scout Centre located at 8 Austin Road, Jordan, Kowloon, in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G).

According to recent media reports, the responsible person of a clubhouse at the above centre was suspected of not complying with relevant requirements and directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to the clubhouse under Cap. 599F on April 10, 2021 and arranged more

than 20 persons participating in one banquet. Moreover, patrons organised a banquet at Hong Kong Scout Centre for about 100 guests on the same day, were suspected of violating the relevant restriction on group gathering under Cap. 599G.

A spokesman for the HAD urged those who joined the banquet at the premises concerned on April 10 and other persons in the know to come forward to OLA at 2881 7498 to provide relevant information to assist in the investigation. Depending on the progress of investigation, the OLA may consider further legal actions, including listing the persons concerned as wanted and/or instigating prosecution.

The OLA will continue to proactively take stringent enforcement action and step up inspections at clubhouses in various districts across the territory to ensure that the responsible persons of the premises and the patrons strictly comply with relevant provisions in the regulations for the prevention and control of diseases. The Government appeals to members of the public for their full compliance with various anti-epidemic requirements so as to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the community.

CHP investigates suspected puffer fish poisoning case

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (April 12) investigating a suspected puffer fish poisoning case, and hence reminded members of the public not to consume puffer fish.

The case involves a 28-year-old man who developed dizziness and palpitation one and a half hour after consuming puffer fish at a restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui in the evening of April 11. He attended the Accident and Emergency Department of Queen Elizabeth Hospital today. The patient is now in stable condition.

"We have alerted the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to the incident and investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The spokesman said that consumption of puffer fish is the main cause of food poisoning from tetrodotoxin. Tetrodotoxin is a potent neurotoxin that can affect the central nervous system.

"Organs such as the liver, gonads and skin of puffer fish have high concentrations of tetrodotoxin. Being heat-stable, the toxin does not decompose upon cooking, boiling, drying or freezing. Tetrodotoxin intoxication can cause problems in respiration and circulation and is potentially fatal. There is no known antidote or antitoxin that can decompose tetrodotoxin. Members of the public are advised to avoid purchasing and

preparing puffer fish or unknown fish for consumption to prevent tetrodotoxin-related food poisoning," the spokesman said.