

CHP investigates eight additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, March 20, the CHP was investigating eight additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 11 372 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 11 371 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, one is imported case, one is local case with unknown sources while the remaining six cases are epidemiologically linked with local cases.

The case with unknown sources involves a 42-year-old man (case number: 11368) who had been asymptomatic. He went to a mobile specimen collection station for testing on March 18 and tested positive. He is a decoration worker in carpentry and last went to work on March 19.

A total of 297 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (March 6 to 19), including 230 local cases of which 50 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).

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.

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, after attending a radio programme today (March 20):

Reporter: BioNtech vaccine is effective against most of the mutated strains and the Sinovac vaccine basically doesn't have any information. Are you worried that people will hesitate with the Sinovac vaccine as it may not have enough protection against the mutated strains? Will you consider also finding other types of vaccine?

Secretary for Food and Health: According to the Joint Scientific Committee's deliberation, they have already given information about the protection of different vaccines against those new variants of concern. According to the experts, the BioNtech vaccine is able to protect against some of the variants of concern. For the Sinovac vaccine, they are still waiting for further information from Sinovac. The experts will continue to monitor the situation and review any data provided to the Department of Health.

Reporter: Do you think the AstraZeneca vaccine is still suitable for vaccination programme in Hong Kong as it's not effective against all types of mutated strains so far?

Secretary for Food and Health: The Hong Kong Government has previously signed advance purchase agreement with the AstraZeneca. We recognise many of the news reports in different countries about the AstraZeneca vaccine. We also notice there are news from the World Health Organization and also some countries most recently said that all the adverse effects are not related to or do not have a direct relationship with the vaccination of the AstraZeneca vaccine. We will continue to monitor the situation and the Department of Health has asked the manufacturer for further information. Regarding procedure, if the AstraZeneca vaccine is going to be authorised in Hong Kong, they would have to first apply to us and the Advisory Panel on COVID-19 Vaccines will review the data first before it recommends for authorisation by the Hong Kong Government. This process has not started yet so we are continuously reviewing the situation.

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

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tseung Kwan O and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice

The Government yesterday (March 19) 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 8pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tseung Kwan O (i.e. Tower 9, La Splendeur, LOHAS Park, 1 Lohas Park Road, Tseung Kwan O) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained. Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from March 6 to 19, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing on or before March 21. As at 2am today, 1 235 residents had undergone testing. Recollection of specimen will be arranged for a resident as the specimen collected was not suitable for testing. The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.30am today (March 20) and carried out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing in accordance with the requirements of the relevant declaration and compulsory testing notice. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended at around 11.15am today.

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) (including the Sai Kung District Office), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health, the Transport Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department mobilised around 320 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including canned food, cup noodles, corn kernels, etc, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory

testing. One box of masks, bleach, hand sanitiser, etc, were also provided to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The HAD also set up a hotline for people restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7.30am today, the Government took enforcement action in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 11.15am. Thirteen persons were found not having undergone compulsory testing and compulsory testing orders and/or a fixed penalty of \$5,000 were issued to them. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

The Government hopes that the some 60 households who have not answered the door will contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after they read the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government hopes this temporary inconvenience will completely cut the local transmission chains and ease residents' worries and fear, so that they will regain confidence in resuming social and business activities in the area, and return to a normal life.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government as a whole is united in fighting against the virus despite all the difficulties, and provided testing for all the residents in the district within a short period of time in the hope of achieving zero cases in the district.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will 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 or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

[DH launches new video to promote oral health](#)

The Department of Health (DH) today (March 20) launched a promotional video with the theme "The password is 320 – World Oral Health Day" on a YouTube channel to promote public awareness on oral health in support of World Oral Health Day and the FDI World Dental Federation's global appeal to make a pledge to care for oral health.

The Consultant in-charge, Dental Services of the DH, Dr Wiley Lam, called on the public to adopt good oral care habits, including keeping the mouth thoroughly clean, having regular dental check-ups, establishing healthy eating habits and avoiding smoking and alcohol, as well as consuming less sugar. "With good oral health, we can not only speak clearly and enjoy delicious food but also improve our general health and quality of life," he added.

The Oral Health Education Division (OHED) of the DH has promoted World Oral Health Day campaigns to the public over the past years, stressing that oral health and general health are closely related, and has made the public aware that oral problems, such as dental decay and gum diseases, share many common risk factors with other non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer. These risk factors include poor personal hygiene, smoking and unhealthy eating habits.

The FDI designates March 20 of each year as World Oral Health Day and calls on the dental profession and community groups to hold events on that day to promote public awareness on oral health. This year, the theme is "Be Proud of Your Mouth". The OHED has conducted World Oral Health Day activities for students of different grades including encouraging kindergarten and primary school students to produce special cards with tips on oral care and share the cards with their family members and friends, and producing specially designed WhatsApp stickers with oral health messages for secondary school students and encouraging them to share the stickers with their friends and family members through social media platforms. The OHED also started a series of promotional activities to disseminate oral health messages to the public by launching the promotional video with the theme "The password is 320 – World Oral Health Day" on its YouTube channel and promoting the theme "Be Proud of Your Mouth" in radio broadcasts, MTR advertisements and its Facebook fan page.

For more information on oral health, please visit the OHED's Toothclub webpage (www.toothclub.gov.hk), the Facebook fan page of "æ,,>ç%™Love Teeth HK" (www.facebook.com/LoveTeethHK) and the OHED YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/channel/UChJUkaM37cgbNGMi23v0ivQ).

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

â€‹During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.