

COVID-19 Testing Backlog

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

To tie in with the "Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme" of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH), the Hospital Authority (HA) contracted a test service vendor to arrange COVID-19 test. The HA was notified by the vendor that some of the test procedures were lengthened due to environmental contamination and subsequent thorough disinfection required in the laboratory. Some of the tests and notification of negative results cannot be completed within 48 hours as the contract terms required.

The HA has reported the incident to the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) and DH. Starting from today (March 8), some of the backlog specimens will be arranged to test in Public Health Laboratory Centre (PHLC) of DH and other three vendors.

According to the report of the vendor, it has completed the test for all specimens received on or before March 2 and most of the March 3 specimens. It is expected that the test for the rest of March 3 specimens and most of the March 4 specimens, around 20 000 specimens will be completed today. The PHLC and the three vendors will continue to render assistance and it is expected that the test for the rest of specimens will be completed in coming days.

The HA is concerned about the incident. The HA has tasked the vendor to review the testing procedures and enhance contingency. The HA will follow the incident with the vendor seriously in accordance to the contract terms to avoid the occurrence of similar incident.

**Expert Committee on Clinical Events
Assessment Following COVID-19
Immunisation assessed three suspected
serious adverse events following
COVID-19 vaccination and DH received
another report of suspected serious**

adverse event following vaccination

The Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation (Expert Committee) convened a meeting today (March 8) to assess suspected serious adverse events following COVID-19 vaccination including one death case and two cases admitted to Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the public hospitals. The Expert Committee preliminarily considered that the events and the vaccination did not have direct causal association.

Under the established mechanism, upon receipt of reports from the Hospital Authority (HA), the Department of Health (DH) will immediately contact the HA for further information and refer the cases to the Expert Committee for deliberation. The Expert Committee would review the case with all available information, including the medical conditions and history of the patient as well as relevant clinical data, available information related to the vaccine and preliminary autopsy findings (if applicable), and conduct causality assessment based on the algorithm of the World Health Organization (WHO).

For the above three cases assessed in today's meeting, the first case was about a 55-year-old woman who had history of hypertension and hyperlipidaemia, suffered from acute stroke on March 5. She was admitted to Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) for treatment and was later transferred to Kwong Wah Hospital for further treatment. Subsequently, she had cardiac arrest and eventually passed away in the morning on March 6. She had received a dose of CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine on March 2. Based on the preliminary autopsy findings of aortic dissection, the Expert Committee considered that the deceased's outcome was not directly associated with COVID-19 vaccination. However, the full autopsy report would be required for the Expert Committee to conclude the causality assessment.

The second case was about an 80-year-old man who has history of diabetes, carotid atherosclerosis, hypertension and stroke. He complained of chest pain on March 6 and attended the Accident and Emergency Department of CMC for treatment. The patient did not respond well to treatment and was transferred to the ICU for further management on the same night. The provisional diagnosis was acute coronary syndrome. He received a dose of CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine on March 1. The Expert Committee considered that the patient's outcome was not directly associated with COVID-19 vaccination. However, the Expert Committee will require more clinical information during treatment to conclude the causality assessment.

The third case was about a 72-year-old woman who has history of diabetes, hyperlipidaemia, hypertension and hypothyroidism, and received a dose of CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine on March 6. She felt malaise after vaccination and skipped two doses of regular insulin. Her general condition decreased yesterday (March 7) morning and she was admitted to Prince of Wales Hospital for treatment. She was suspected of having severe diabetic ketoacidosis and transferred to the ICU for further treatment. Provisional diagnosis was diabetes, complicated with hyperosmolar hyperglycemic state.

The Expert Committee considered that the patient's situation was due to her underlying diseases and skipping of her regular insulin.

In addition, the DH announced that as of 4pm today, a report of death case was received from the HA in the past 24 hours regarding a suspected serious adverse event following COVID-19 vaccination. According to the information provided by the HA, the case involved a 71-year-old-man with unknown past medical history who was found collapsed at home last night (March 7). He was admitted to the Accident and Emergency Department of the United Christian Hospital for treatment but did not respond to resuscitation and passed away early this morning. He had received COVID-19 vaccination at a private clinic on March 3. The case has been referred to Coroner. The DH has reported the case to the Expert Committee at today's meeting and will obtain further information for the Expert Committee's assessment.

According to the mortality rates in Hong Kong, there were on average 10.2 persons and 8.1 persons passed away every day respectively due to ischemic heart diseases and cerebrovascular diseases in 2019. People with chronic illness should seek medical attention if they feel unwell. They should also adhere to their treatment as prescribed by their doctors.

"Based on available data, there is no particular safety concern detected from the CoronaVac COVID-19 vaccine. According to the product information of the vaccine, patients with uncontrolled severe chronic diseases should not receive the vaccine. Patients with severe chronic illness should use the vaccine with caution; if necessary, delay vaccination after doctor's assessment," a DH spokesperson urged.

[Government to gazette compulsory testing notice](#)

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

Currently, in all districts in Hong Kong, if one or more new confirmed cases are found in the residential buildings (including buildings for both commercial and residential uses), or there are sewage samples tested positive which implied possible infection risks, the buildings will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

For testing targeting at workplaces, if one or more confirmed cases are found in a workplace, it will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

Seven premises fulfilling the above criteria will be included in the compulsory testing notice today (March 8). Among them, since there was staff confirmed positive in Tower 15 and Tower 16 of Crystal Cove, Caribbean Coast, 1 Kin Tung Road, Tung Chung, residents, visitors and workers of the building would possibly be subject to higher infectious risks and are required to undergo compulsory testing.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are as follows:

Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from February 23 to March 8, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by March 10, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 6 and March 8, 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 reminds 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 who is 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, have to undergo testing within two days of he/she becoming aware of 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 (March 9) for local residents and workers subject to compulsory testing:

- Wang Lai House, Wang Tau Hom Estate, Wong Tai Sin
- Cheong Yuen Building, 1-9 Yen Chow Street, Sham Shui Po
- Block 6, Belair Monte, Fanling

The service period of the mobile specimen collection station at Edinburgh Place in Central will be extended to March 14 (Sunday). 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 in all districts to receive testing free of charge.

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 Centre for Health Protection (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 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 DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purpose 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."

Man sentenced for violating Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation

A 69-year-old man was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for 14 days by the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (March 8) for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) (the Regulation).

The man was classified as a close contact of a COVID-19 confirmed case on July 30, 2020. However, he ignored the instructions given by the Department of Health (DH) to be isolated at quarantine centre and became out of reach. He was subsequently intercepted by the police on August 11, 2020. He was charged with contravening sections 32(1) and 32(3) of the Regulation and was sentenced by the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today to immediate imprisonment for 14 days.

Pursuant to section 32 of the Regulation, a person shall not, knowing that he is a contact or is infected with a specified infectious disease, expose other persons to the risk of infection by the person's presence or conduct in any public conveyance or any street, public place, place of entertainment or assembly, club or hotel or by carrying on any trade,

business or occupation. Offenders face a maximum fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for six months.

A spokesman for the DH said that co-operation by the public is the key to stop the spread of the disease in the community. Such irresponsible act increases the risk of exposing other persons to infection. The government severely condemns such acts and appeals to the public to adhere to the relevant regulations. As of today, a total of three persons have been convicted by the courts for breaching relevant regulations and have received sentences including immediate imprisonment for up to four months. The spokesman reiterated that resolute actions will be taken against anyone who breaches the regulation.

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tsim Sha Tsui

The Government today (March 8) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 8.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tsim Sha Tsui (i.e. Tsim Sha Tsui Mansion, 83-97 Nathan Road / 36-50 Lock Road, Tsim Sha Tsui; see Annex) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about 7am tomorrow (March 9), in order to achieve the goal of zero cases in the district with concerted efforts.

A Government spokesman said, "The Government had issued a compulsory testing notice in respect of Tsim Sha Tsui Mansion in mid-February and conducted a blitz enforcement action on February 17. Test records of around 290 residents of the Mansion were checked. Among them, around 60 persons were found to have violated the requirements of the compulsory testing notice. "

"Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As there is a confirmed case recurred in Tsim Sha Tsui Mansion recently, and that sub-divided units are common in the building which is relatively old, as assessed, the risk of infection in the relevant area may be higher, the

Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 2am tomorrow. Persons subject to compulsory testing will be arranged to undergo nucleic acid testing at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons.

"We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible at night after most people are released from work. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 7am tomorrow with a view to allowing residents to start going to work at around 7am. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to an individual who is not a resident in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his or her personal information for contact purposes.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from March 6 to 8, 2021, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, according to the compulsory testing notice issued today, any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from February 23 to March 8, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before March 10.

The Government has prepared simple food and cleaning supplies for the residents restricted by the declaration. The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) and a dedicated hotline (Tel: 3755 6816) for ethnic minorities. The hotline services started operation at 8.30pm today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

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.

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The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.