

# Government strengthens COVID-19 testing

The Government has been refining its anti-epidemic strategies in accordance with the development of the epidemic, including conducting large-scale COVID-19 testing for groups of different risks under the three key principles of "compulsory testing on a mandatory basis, targeted testing on an obligatory basis and testing on a voluntary basis" with a view to achieving "early identification, early isolation and early treatment", and cutting the transmission chains in the community as far as possible. Having regard to the recent higher risk of transmission and infection in different premises or groups and the implementation of strengthened anti-epidemic measures for the resumption of various economic and social activities, the Government encourages or requires people of various groups to undergo testing. The supply of testing services is being further enhanced to cope with the increasing demand for testing so as to meet anti-epidemic goals and facilitate the public.

The Government has all along been providing convenient testing services to the public through various channels, including free testing service. For details, please refer to [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html).

In accordance with the latest direction issued by the Government on March 2 under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), persons responsible for carrying on a catering business and scheduled premises are required to arrange all staff involved to undergo a polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19 once every 14 days in order to extend the opening hours of dine-in services to 10pm and relax the limit of person per table to four persons, or to resume businesses in the case of scheduled premises.

The Government reminds persons responsible for carrying on a catering business or scheduled premises that if they intend to operate under relaxed restrictions by adopting the infection control measures prescribed under Cap. 599F, all staff must undergo a second test on or before next Wednesday (March 10), and that all staff are required to obtain a negative test result by March 11 before they can go to work.

At present, employees of scheduled premise and catering businesses, construction site workers, school staff, as well as local residents and staff subject to compulsory testing may receive free testing at community testing centres. The number of tests available for appointments at community testing centres has been greatly increased to over 32 000 per day. As of March 5, the appointment rate of the 19 community testing centres in the territory for the next seven days is only about 30 per cent, with plenty of places available to meet the testing demand. Moreover, about 20 mobile specimen collection stations are in service to provide free testing to the public. Some of them are dedicated to providing services to staff in catering business and

scheduled premises under Cap. 599F only. The testing capacity should be sufficient to meet the testing demand of the relevant sectors. Staff from these sectors may attend community testing centres and mobile specimen collection stations in various districts for free testing.

In addition, they may also undergo testing through other testing channels (see [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for details), including obtaining deep throat saliva (DTS) collection packs at post offices, MTR stations or designated general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority (HA), and return the DTS specimen to one of the 80-plus designated collection points.

Over the past few weeks, the Government has distributed an average of some 60 000 specimen collection packs daily, and the number of specimen bottles collected per day was about 27 000, which is less than half of the amount distributed. The Government calls on the public and organisations to refrain from collecting more sets of packs than needed so that others in need can also obtain specimen collection packs for testing.

Regarding the prolonged turnaround time of a testing contractor of the HA caused by an influx of testing demand within a short period of time, according to the report submitted by the concerned laboratory to the HA, the backlog has been cleared and the turnaround time for testing result has resumed normal to within 48 hours as per contract requirement.

The Government and HA have increased the number of contractors and streamlined the distribution of the specimen bottles to different contractors. At present, most of the citizens who return the DTS specimen bottles can receive testing results within two to three days.

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## **Statistics for COVID-19 Vaccination Programme**

Under the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme which started on February 26, as of 8pm today (March 5), a total of about 10 100 persons received their first dose of the Sinovac vaccine in the past 24 hours, including about 3 900 persons receiving vaccination at five Community Vaccination Centres, and about 5 600 persons at private doctors and clinics participating in the programme.

Since February 22, a cumulative total of about 72 300 persons have received their first dose of the Sinovac vaccine.

As of 8pm today, a total of about 4 900 persons had reserved their first and second doses of the Sinovac vaccine online in the past 24 hours. Since

February 23, a cumulative total of about 267 600 persons have made reservations for vaccination of the Sinovac vaccine.

As of 8pm today, a total of about 6 000 persons had reserved their first and second doses of the Comirnaty vaccine online in the past 24 hours. Since March 3, a cumulative total of about 110 800 persons have made reservations for vaccination of the Comirnaty vaccine.

For the past 24 hours ended at 0000 hours today, there was one case of ambulance transfer to hospital (details at attachment).

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## [Government gazettes compulsory testing notice and specifications under Prevention and Control of Disease \(Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons\) Regulation](#)

The Government exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and gazetted a compulsory testing notice and specifications, which require any person who had been present at five specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test, and continue to empower a registered medical practitioner to require any person whom he clinically suspects has contracted COVID-19 to undergo a test during a period of 14 days from March 6 to March 19, 2021.

### Compulsory testing notice

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.

Five buildings fulfilling the above criteria were included in the compulsory testing notice today (March 5).

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 February 20 to March 5, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by March 7, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 3 and March 5, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.

2. Any person who had been engaged to work or had been on duty (including full-time, part-time and relief staff) at any specified premises listed in Part B of Annex 1 at any time during the period from February 20 to March 5, 2021, have to undergo testing by March 7, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 3 and March 5, 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 6) for local residents and workers subject to compulsory testing:

- Platform outside Tsuen King Circuit Sports Centre, Tsuen Wan
- Yan Tat House, On Tat Estate, Kwun Tong

The service period of the mobile specimen collection stations at Wong Tai Sin Square, Maple Street Playground in Sham Shui Po, Plaza of Sha Tin Town Hall and Tai Po Community Centre will be extended to March 14 (Sunday). Starting from tomorrow (March 6), the mobile specimen collection stations at Edinburgh Place in Central, Plaza of Sha Tin Town Hall and Tai Po Community Centre will be open to all members of the public for 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 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](http://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/](http://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](http://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](http://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/](http://www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info/).

Relevant specifications for compulsory testing for persons clinically suspected to have contracted COVID-19

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According to expert advice, compulsory testing for symptomatic patients can effectively slow down the transmission of the virus by early identification, early isolation and early treatment. To keep the epidemic situation under control, the Government considers it necessary to continue to solicit help from medical practitioners in identifying possibly infected persons as soon as possible.

During the period of 14 days from March 6 to March 19, 2021, registered medical practitioners may, by a written direction, require a person whom the medical practitioner attends to in the course of professional practice and clinically suspects to have contracted COVID-19 to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test. Persons who receive the written direction (persons who are subject to testing under written directions) should undergo a test within two days after the issue date of the written direction (the testing deadline).

Persons who are subject to testing under written directions may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

(1) To use the specimen bottle provided by the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction to collect a deep throat saliva specimen and submit the specimen bottle to designated specimen collection points by the testing deadline (see the specimen collection points and time at [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html)). Having reported the case to the DH, the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction will be notified of the test result; or

(2) To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories recognised by the DH (see the list at [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List\\_of\\_recognised\\_laboratories RTPCR.pdf](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf)) by the testing deadline and submit the test result to the medical practitioner who issued the written direction or his clinic staff by electronic mail, fax, or by hardcopy within four days after the testing deadline.

For example, if the written direction is issued on Monday, the person subject to testing under the written direction should undergo a test via one of the above options on or before Wednesday, the testing deadline. If the test result of the specimen is preliminary positive, the specimen will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the DH for a confirmatory test. Confirmed cases will be followed up and announced by the Centre for Health Protection of the DH.

"Persons who are subject to testing under written directions are suspected to be infected and should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the community testing centres for testing. To reduce transmission risk, relevant persons who underwent testing are advised to stay at home and avoid going out when waiting for test results."

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."

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## **HKMA alerts public to phishing scams via hyperlinks embedded in SMS or emails**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) has recently received reports from banks about their customers having received phishing SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks purportedly sent by the banks. After clicking the embedded hyperlinks, the customers were lured into entering their internet banking login IDs, passwords and SMS One-Time Password (OTP) provided by the banks. Unauthorised transactions were subsequently conducted over the accounts of the customers and they suffered financial losses.

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or e-mails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or OTP, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Members of the public should stay alert to any SMS or emails purported to be sent by banks. They are advised not to click on the hyperlinks embedded in these SMS or emails. Under no circumstances should they disclose their

internet banking login information to websites of unknown sources.

If members of the public have disclosed their internet banking login details to untrusted websites or have found unauthorised transactions being conducted over their accounts, they should contact their bank as soon as possible and report to the Police or contact the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Police at 2860 5012.

The HKMA wishes to remind the public to carefully protect their sensitive personal information, check their e-banking accounts from time to time and review alert messages and statements issued by banks carefully.

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## **Public attendance arrangements for a review of admission to bail at High Court**

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary will put in place special public attendance arrangements to facilitate the orderly conduct of the bail reviews involving 11 defendants at the High Court tomorrow (March 6).

The information of the hearings has already been uploaded onto the Judiciary website at <https://e-services.judiciary.hk/dcl/view.jsp?lang=en&date=06032021&court=CACFI>. The hearings are listed in three separate sessions, to commence at 10am, not earlier than 11.30am and 2.30pm respectively.

In anticipation of excessive demand for seats, the Judiciary will make available as many seats as possible to ensure open justice. Taking into account the capacity of available courtrooms and broadcasting facilities of the whole court building, the Judiciary will arrange three court extensions to broadcast the court proceedings. A total of 100 press seats/standing places and 156 public seats/standing places will be provided for different groups of court users to observe the proceedings. There will be 12 family seats, eight press seats and eight public seats in the courtroom. The court extensions are located at 3/F, 4/F and 5/F lobbies.

All broadcasting facilities will include both audio and visual presentation of court proceedings inside court extension areas.

Courts users who wish to observe the hearings will be required to line up at designated areas at the LG4/F podium outside the High Court Building. All tickets for all three hearing sessions during the day will be distributed at 8am. Court users should follow the instructions of the Judiciary staff and

security personnel.

To ensure fair and optimal use of the limited number of seats during the hearings, any seat which has been left vacant for 15 minutes or more during the court hearings will be re-allocated to another court user. This requirement is generally in line with the existing condition prescribed in the admission tickets of the High Court that the ticket will be no longer valid if the ticket holder has left his/her seat/place for 15 minutes or more.

Court users are reminded that all persons who enter the Judiciary premises are required to use the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app, or to have their names, contact numbers and the dates and times of their visits recorded on a registration form.