

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:

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.

Yellow fire danger warning

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Yellow fire danger warning

The fire danger situation today (February 17) is yellow and the risk of fire is high. People are urged to prevent fires breaking out and hikers should also be vigilant.

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.

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 two or more confirmed cases are found in a workplace, it will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

Four buildings fulfilling the above criteria were included in the compulsory testing notice on February 16.

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 3 to February 16, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by February 18, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between February 14 and February 16, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.

The Government will set up mobile specimen collection stations at Cheerful Court in Ngau Tau Kok, Fung Tak Estate Community Centre in Diamond Hill and Wo Ming Court, Tseung Kwan O today (February 17) for local residents and workers subject to compulsory testing. The service period of the mobile specimen collection station at Kwun Chung Sports Centre in Jordan, Sha Tsui Road Playground in Tsuen Wan, Muk Lun Street Playground in Wong Tai Sin and MacPherson Playground in Mong Kok will be extended to February 17, February 21 (Sunday), February 26 (Friday) and February 28 (Sunday) respectively. 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.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau 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."

Caritas Medical Centre announces passing away of COVID-19 patient

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for the Caritas Medical Centre (CMC) today (February 16) announced that a patient confirmed with COVID-19 infection passed away this evening.

An 81-year-old female patient (case number: 10503) with chronic diseases was admitted to CMC on January 31 for upper respiratory tract infection symptoms and fever. She was later tested positive for COVID-19. Her condition continued to deteriorate and she succumbed at 8:03pm tonight.

The hospital is saddened about the passing away of the patient and would offer necessary assistance to her family members.

Including the above patient, 189 COVID-19 patients have passed away in public hospitals so far.

Advisory Panel on COVID-19 Vaccines convenes meeting to review supplementary data and information submitted by Sinovac

â€‹The Advisory Panel on COVID-19 Vaccines (Advisory Panel) convened a meeting today (February 16) to review the supplementary data and information submitted by Sinovac Biotech (Hong Kong) Limited (Sinovac) on its COVID-19 vaccine. The meeting was chaired by convenor Professor Wallace Lau Chak-sing.

The Advisory Panel held a meeting on February 10 on the application for emergency use of the COVID-19 vaccine by Sinovac. Having reviewed the relevant information on safety, efficacy and quality, the Advisory Panel requested Sinovac to provide supplementary data and information to establish that the benefits of using its COVID-19 vaccine for protection against COVID-19 outweigh the risks. Sinovac later compiled the relevant data as requested and submitted supplementary information to the Department of Health to clarify that save for emergency situations, it is recommended that the first and second dose of vaccine should be received with an interval of 28 days. As regards the development of antibodies after vaccination to support the interval for vaccination, the Phase 1 and 2 clinical data previously submitted by Sinovac indicated that the vaccine could effectively trigger an immune response and create antibodies in adults and the elderly. Furthermore, Sinovac has also provided information on the relevant tests on the immunogenicity of the vaccine under Phase 3 clinical trials conducted in Brazil (triggering of immune response including the creating of antibodies).

At the meeting today, the Advisory Panel reviewed the information submitted earlier and later supplemented by Sinovac on safety, efficacy and quality. The Advisory Panel considers that the relevant clinical information, based on the results of different situations such as the trial design, countries (including Brazil, Turkey and Indonesia), target groups (such as healthcare staff with higher risks, people with mild symptoms who need no treatment), as well as the testing targets etc., indicated that the efficacy of Sinovac's vaccine was 50.65% to 91.25% for people over 18 years old and that the safety of the vaccine was satisfactory. The information on quality also indicated that the manufacturer has met the Good Manufacturing Practice standards, and has obtained approval for use from the National Medical Products Administration and other overseas drug regulatory authorities. The Advisory Panel considers that, under the current global epidemic situation, the benefits of authorising the use of the COVID-19 vaccine by Sinovac for protecting against COVID-19 outweigh the risks. To ensure that the relevant vaccine continues to fulfil the requirements of safety, efficacy and quality, the Advisory Panel recommends attaching conditions to require the applicant to execute relevant risk management programme, and continue to provide the latest clinical data, laboratory analysis certificates for each batch of vaccines, as well as timely update of quality reports, etc. With a view to strengthening the transparency of information regarding vaccines, the expert advice on vaccines given by the Advisory Panel will be made publicly available. The relevant documents will later be uploaded to the website of the Food and Health Bureau.

The Government spokesman said, "The Government welcomes the recommendation by the Advisory Panel on the authorisation application for the vaccine. The Secretary for Food and Health will consider the relevant recommendation and come to a decision on the authorisation of the vaccine for emergency use as soon as possible. The Government will ensure that vaccines satisfy the criteria of safety, efficacy and quality, and obtain emergency use approval in accordance with the relevant requirements as well as stringent approval procedures under the Prevention and Control of Disease

(Use of Vaccines) Regulation (Cap. 599K), before arranging for members of the public to receive the vaccines. To enhance the public's confidence in vaccines, the Government's work in vaccine administration will be based on scientific evidence and adhere to the principles of openness and transparency. We will provide members of the public with the latest information on the relevant vaccines through different channels in a timely manner, and make public the views of experts on the vaccines, so that the public can grasp correct and comprehensive information on them."