

DH strengthens health quarantine and testing arrangements for inbound travellers

The Department of Health (DH) will strengthen health quarantine and COVID-19 testing arrangements for all inbound travellers starting tomorrow (April 8). All asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) will be mandated under the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) to collect their deep throat saliva samples at the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) for conducting testing for COVID-19.

From tomorrow onwards, inbound travellers from all flights are required to take shuttle bus from the HKIA immediately to the venue mentioned above to collect their deep throat saliva samples in accordance with the instructions and submit the samples to the DH personnel on duty at the venue for conducting testing for COVID-19. Afterwards, they have to go to their accommodation for the compulsory quarantine as soon as possible by their own means.

If a sample tests positive, the CHP will notify the person concerned as early as possible and arrange for admission to a public hospital for treatment. In general, if no notification is received within three working days after returning a sample, it means the test result is negative and the person concerned is required to continue the compulsory quarantine until the quarantine period ends.

Taking reference from the testing arrangements for Peru returnees by chartered flights, the DH considered that the arrangement to let travellers from places with higher risk to wait for test results at the Specimen Collection Centre could efficiently identify confirmed patients and arrange to send their close contacts to quarantine centres. As 248 cases (69.1 per cent) of the 359 imported cases recorded in the past 14 days (March 25 to April 7) involved people who had been to the United Kingdom (UK), the DH has decided to adopt the same testing arrangement for inbound travellers from the UK after assessing venue restrictions and relevant infection control risks.

From April 9 onwards, asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving on flights from the UK are required to proceed to the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre to collect their deep throat saliva samples and wait for the test results there. If tested positive, they will be arranged for admission to hospital for treatment while the close contacts who travelled with them will be sent to designated quarantine centres. For those who are tested negative, they can go home or to a designated place to continue completion of the 14-day compulsory quarantine.

As the testing takes time, the people concerned might need to stay at

the venue to wait for 8 hours or more and those arriving at night might have to wait longer. The DH urged for the understanding and patience from inbound travellers on the arrangement.

Starting tomorrow, the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme will also be further extended to inbound travellers who have been to Hubei Province in the past 14 days arriving via land boundary control points (Shenzhen Bay Port and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port). Specimen collection containers will be provided by DH staff to these travellers for collection of their deep throat saliva samples for testing when they are undergoing compulsory home quarantine. They are required to collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at home in accordance with the instructions, and to have their family members or friends deliver it to any of the collection points in the same morning.

The collection points of the samples are 13 designated chest clinics or dermatological clinics under the DH from 9am to 11am on Monday to Sunday and also some general out-patient clinics under the Hospital Authority from 8.30am to 9.30am on Monday to Friday (except public holiday).

[SCED speaks on RTHK](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on issues relating to the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) at a media session after attending special meetings of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council today (April 7):

Reporter: You said that it's not only the question itself, but the expression of the whole programme, so what's wrong with the show itself? Will you take any follow-up actions regarding the issue with RTHK? Will there be any punishments?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I think I have made it crystal clear in my earlier public statement. And I also fully explained at the meeting with the LegCo Finance Committee (just now). We are focusing on RTHK, both as a government department and a public service broadcaster, that they have the obligation to uphold and abide by the Charter of RTHK. Also, as a government department, of course we all uphold the One-China Principle, which is a fundamental constitutional right. That's why I think we have a duty to remind RTHK, being part of the government departments and also the only public service broadcaster (in Hong Kong), to make sure that this principle is not being undermined.

Reporter: RTHK has said that it hasn't violated the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, so how do you want it to further deal with the matter, when it said it hasn't done anything wrong?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I think I have made it very clear, both in public and also in my direct enquiry with RTHK, on this matter. I think it will be followed up accordingly.

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

CHP investigates 21 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (April 7), the CHP was investigating 21 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 936 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 935 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve 12 males and 9 females aged between 16 and 61. Among them, 12 had travel history during the incubation period and four are overseas students. 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.

The CHP urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons, who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "In view of the proliferation of the disease and 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, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use.

After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

The CHP will report the cases to the World Health Organization, the National Health Commission, the Health Commission of Guangdong Province, relevant health authorities and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 4pm today, a total of 85 076 calls were received.

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.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, 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 door knobs, 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;
 - Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
 - 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.
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Suspected MERS case reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (April 7) reported a suspected case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit. The case is detailed below:

Sex	Male
Age	48
Affected area involved	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
High-risk exposure	Nil
Hospital	Princess Margaret Hospital
Condition	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Negative

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Locally, the CHP's surveillance with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Inbound travellers and members of the public who recently visited the Middle East and developed relevant symptoms within 14 days will be classified as suspected MERS cases. They will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the World Health Organization's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (April 7), public hospitals had reported to the Department of Health the admission of 120 patients (60 male and 60 female, aged eight to 96) in the past 24 hours who met the reporting criteria of COVID-19. Appropriate tests have been arranged for the patients.

There are 729 patients under isolation currently. So far, 236 patients who had COVID-19 confirmed or probable infections have been discharged upon recovery.

With the service consolidation of the AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital test centres, and service commencement of the triage and test centres at the Accident and Emergency Departments of various public hospitals, the Hospital Authority (HA) will cease to announce test service statistics of the AsiaWorld-Expo centre separately beginning today. All preliminary positive test results obtained by public hospital laboratories will be further confirmed by the Department of Health and announced as confirmed cases collectively.

The HA will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.