

Amended compulsory testing notice issued for seventh round of compulsory testing for staff members of RCHEs, RCHDs and nursing homes

The Government today (February 17) said that an amended compulsory testing notice for the seventh round of compulsory testing for staff members of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) and nursing homes has been issued. The arrangement aims to amend the requirements and procedure for the specified test with a view to offering more testing means for the staff members.

In accordance with section 46(a) of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap. 1), the Secretary for Food and Health has amended the compulsory testing notice issued on February 3, 2021. An amended compulsory testing notice was issued in accordance with section 10(1) of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) yesterday (February 16), requiring persons who are employed by and will be on duty at RCHEs, RCHDs, nursing homes and day service units attached to the premises of residential care homes during the period from February 21 to March 2, 2021, or who will provide services to residents or users through hire-of-service contracts with residential care homes and the aforementioned units during that period (including full-time, part-time and relief staff), to undergo polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 during the period from February 7 to 20, 2021, according to the amended requirements and procedure set out in the amended notice (the Specified Test).

The staff of the aforementioned institutions may choose the following means to undergo the Specified Test:

- (1) To undergo the specified test in any of the Community Testing Centres (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/), Temporary Testing Centres (if any) (see the list at www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_supportser/sub_ttc/), or mobile specimen collection stations (if any) (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) in accordance with the instructions given by the staff at the centre/station;
- (2) To undergo the test as arranged by institution operators at a laboratory listed on the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf) and as instructed by the staff of the laboratory;
- (3) (Newly added testing means) To obtain a specimen bottle from one of the 121 post offices, 47 general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority or

vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations, collect a deep throat saliva sample in the specimen bottle as per the guidelines provided together with the specimen bottle, and return the specimen bottle with the sample (see the specimen bottles distribution and specimen collection locations and times at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);

(4) (Newly added testing means) Undergo the Specified Test at general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority; or

(5) To self-arrange testing provided by a laboratory listed on the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" at their own expense (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf).

Any person who fails to comply with the testing notice commits an offence and may be subject to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. He or she 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.

A spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) reminded that staff of the said institutions who would undergo testing at community testing centres should make advance booking via the community testing centre booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk) for the free testing service. In addition, institution operators should remind their staff members to properly keep the SMS notifications of their test results or their test result reports. Institution operators are required to keep records of their staff having received the Specified Test and the results within the time frame specified by the Government. Institution operators also have to co-operate with Checking Officers (Compulsory Testing) of the SWD who are enforcing the regulations at residential care homes.