

CHP investigates 13 confirmed and 16 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and seven additional Omicron cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 3) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 3, the CHP was investigating 13 additional confirmed cases and 16 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 29 additional cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in that 24 hours), taking the number of confirmed cases to 12 677 so far and starting from January 1 recorded 45 asymptomatic cases. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 12 722 cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 28 imported cases and one case epidemiologically linked with imported case. Twenty-seven of the cases involved mutant strains while mutation test results of the remaining two cases are pending. The patients comprise six males and 23 females, aged 24 to 66. Among the imported cases, one of them arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and 27 from Group A specified places (high-risk); eight patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and 17 tested positive during quarantine. Case 12709 is a close contact of a previously confirmed imported cases 12693 and tested positive at a hospital. Case 12726 and 12727 are close contacts of two previously confirmed imported cases 12593 and 12655 respectively. They tested positive at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre (PBQC). Case 12708 is the case epidemiologically linked with imported case, who is the wife of case 12654 related to Moon Palace. She was arranged to quarantine at the PBQC on December 30 and tested positive subsequently. The case details have been announced yesterday (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202201/02/P2022010200536.htm).

For imported cases 12699 and 12700, the patients had stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation period. Case 12699 involves a 45-year-old male patient who is a local aircrew member living at Tower 6B, Century Link in Tung Chung. He departed Hong Kong for Australia on December 27, 2021 and returned to Hong Kong on December 30 by flight CX178 from Australia. His specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. After his arrival, the patient then stayed at Headland Hotel (airport hotel) under relevant quarantine arrangement. He developed sore throat on January 1 and tested positive on the same day with Ct value of about 30. According to the patient, he departed for the United Kingdom on December 19. His test conducted at the TSCC after his arrival on December 20 and the test conducted at a community testing centre on December 22 both tested negative. He then departed for Malaysia on

December 26 and returned Hong Kong on the same day. His test conducted at the TSCC tested negative. Case 12700 involves a 28-year-old female patient living at Tower 1, Yuk Ming Towers, 208 Third Street, Sai Ying Pun. She departed Hong Kong on December 23 for Canada after she tested negative on December 21. She arrived in Hong Kong on December 30 from Canada by flight AC007 and her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. She underwent compulsory quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel (Best Western Plus Hotel Hong Kong, Sai Ying Pun) and her sample on January 1, 2022 tested positive, with a CT value less than 30.

The CHP is also investigating a case epidemiologically linked with imported case which is tested preliminarily positive involving a 35-year-old male. He is a family member of an earlier imported case 12676 living together. He has no recent travel history. He is asymptomatic and as a close contact, he was arranged to conduct quarantine at PBQC on January 1. His specimen collected on January 3 tested preliminarily positive with a Ct value of 30/32. The test results on mutant strains are pending. He works at Unit 2002, Floor 20, The Metropolis Tower, 10 Metroplis Drive, Hung Hom where he last went to work on December 31. The patient has not received COVID-19 vaccination.

Also, the CHP is investigating an overseas case involving a 31-year-old male patient who is a local aircrew member living at Yiu Chung Building, 370A Portland Street, Mong Kok. He tested negative in Hong Kong on December 24 and travelled to the United States (US) on December 25. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 26 from the US by flight CX882 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. Subsequently, he travelled to the US on December 30 by flight CX846 after he tested negative on December 28 in Hong Kong. His specimen collected in the US on December 31 tested positive. He developed cough and fever from December 30. He received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comirnaty) on July 1 and July 22 in Hong Kong.

With regard to the four above-mentioned cases, as a prudent measure, specified persons who were present at the relevant venues (including the places where the cases resided, visited or worked in Hong Kong during the incubation periods) at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified dates.

A total of 166 cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (December 20 to January 2, 2022). Five of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related cases, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 12573, 12580, 12590, 12607, 12617, 12619 and 12656 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. These cases involve four males and three females aged 15 to 61 years old. Two of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC and four tested positive during quarantine; and one tested positive during compulsory testing for persons working in airport.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 102 cases

involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as the passenger flight (CX906) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from Manila, the Philippines, on January 1, 2022 had seven passengers who tested positive upon arrival, the DH thus invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit the landing of passenger flights in Hong Kong from Manila operated by Cathay Pacific from January 3 to 16, 2022.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local cases with mutant strains, the CHP reminded that persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

Specified persons in relation to the following specified premises are also reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the CTN tomorrow (January 4):

- Cheung Hing Building, 44-48 Pitt Street, Yau Ma Tei
- Block 18A, Serenity Villa, 230A Tai Po Tau, Tai Po
- On Hei House, Siu Hei Court, 201 Wu Chui Road, Tuen Mun
- Tower 17, Hong Kong Parkview, 88 Tai Tam Reservoir Road, Tai Tam
- Grandeur Terrace Block 2, 88 Tin Shui Road, Tin Shui Wai
- Tower 6, Albany Cove, Caribbean Coast Phase II, 1 Kin Tung Road, Tung Chung (excluding the Greenfield English (International) Kindergarten (Tung Chung) located on the ground floor of Tower 6, Albany Cove, Caribbean Coast Phase II and Tower 7, Albany Cove, Caribbean Coast)
- Block 6, Villa Athena, 600 Sai Sha Road, Ma On Shan
- Tower 1, Yuk Ming Towers, 208 Third Street, Sai Ying Pun

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the reported cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "The global situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility, and there are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."

Government tightens boarding and quarantine requirements for places with Omicron cases detected

The Government announced today (January 3) that in view of the latest global developments of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, Bulgaria will be specified as a Group A specified place from 0.00am on January 6 to tighten the boarding and quarantine requirements for relevant inbound travellers.

To manage and prevent the importation risks posed by Omicron cases, the Government will continue to employ the most stringent measures to guard against importation of cases. Overseas places where Omicron cases have been detected that may lead to local transmission and exportation of cases will be specified as Group A specified places. Noting that the detection of Omicron cases was confirmed in Bulgaria, the Government will specify it as a Group A specified place from 0.00am on January 6. Non-Hong Kong residents who have stayed there within 21 days will not be allowed to enter Hong Kong. Hong Kong residents can only board a flight for Hong Kong if they have been fully vaccinated and hold a recognised vaccination record. They will have to undergo compulsory quarantine in a designated quarantine hotel for 21 days upon returning to Hong Kong, with six tests to be conducted during quarantine, followed by compulsory testing in a community testing centre on the 26th day of arrival in Hong Kong.

Details on the relevant boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for respective specified places can be found at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/inbound-travel.html.

The Government will gazette the relevant updated specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to effect the above measures.

Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order

A 41-year-old man was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for 15 days by the District Court today (January 3) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C).

The man was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he

must conduct quarantine at home for 14 days. Before the expiry of the quarantine order, he left the place of quarantine on November 13, 2020, without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer. He was charged with contravening sections 8(1) and 8(5) of the Regulation and was sentenced by the District Court today to immediate imprisonment for 15 days.

â€‹Breaching a compulsory quarantine order is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. A spokesman for the Department of Health said the sentence sends a clear message to the community that breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence that the Government will not tolerate, and solemnly reminded the public to comply with the regulations. As of today, a total of 212 persons have been convicted by the courts for breaching quarantine orders and have received sentences including immediate imprisonment for up to 14 weeks or a fine of up to \$15,000. The spokesman reiterated that resolute actions will be taken against anyone who has breached the relevant regulations.

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified “restricted area” in Tai Wai

The Government today (January 3) 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 7pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tai Wai (i.e. Tower 2, Granville Garden, 18 Pik Tin Street, Tai Wai. 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 "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about 7.30am tomorrow (January 4).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a preliminary tested positive case who has lived in the abovementioned building was detected today, and the preliminary test result involved a mutant strain, the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, so the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area after the test result was found to be positive."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 1am tomorrow. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test 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 for door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons.

The Government spokesman said, "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. 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 7.30am tomorrow. 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 individuals who are not residents 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/her personal information for contact purposes.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from January 1, 2022 to January 3, 2022, 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 to be issued today, any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from December 14, 2021 to January 3, 2022, 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 January 5, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the preliminary tested positive case carrying variant of concern suspected to be Omicron are required to undergo compulsory testing on days 2, 3, 4, 7, 12 and 19 counting from the day subsequent to that when the relevant confirmed case last stayed in that building before being admitted to hospital for treatment or leaving Hong Kong.

The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which starts operation at 7pm 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 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.

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 3) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From December 26 last year to January 1 this year, three community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 66 with good past health, who lives in Wah Yat House, Tin Wah Estate, Tin Shui Wai;
2. A male patient, aged 76 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Man Wing Mansion, 503-507 Nathan Road, Yau Ma Tei; and
3. A male patient, aged 59 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Tung Hing House, Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

In 2022 (as of January 1), no LD case has been recorded so far. In 2021, 69 LD cases were reported. In 2020 and 2019, there were 104 and 105 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection including poor maintenance of water systems leading to

stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and

- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:

1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.