

CHP announces no new local confirmed cases of COVID-19 today

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has announced that as of 4pm today (May 19), no new local confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had been recorded, and that the number of cases in Hong Kong remained at 1 056 so far (comprising 1 055 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The CHP will further extend the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme tomorrow (May 20) to conduct free COVID-19 testing for selected staff members working at residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes. Strengthening testing for asymptomatic staff members at these institutions will help identify silent carriers early and minimise the risk of cluster infection there to safeguard the health of staff members and residents.

Under the programme, the DH, with the assistance of the Social Welfare Department, will provide specimen containers to the institutions starting tomorrow and invite each institution to arrange for three staff members to collect deep throat saliva samples for testing. Priority would be given to those who come in close contact with residents on a routine basis, such as nurses, health workers and care workers.

Staff members taking part in the programme should be asymptomatic and participation should be voluntary. They should collect samples in accordance with the instructions by themselves during the specified collection period and return the specimen containers on the same day to the collection points of the DH or the Hospital Authority, or via the door-to-door specimen collection service (charges apply). The collection points of the samples are 13 designated chest clinics or dermatological clinics under the DH from 9am to 1pm on Monday to Friday and also some general out-patient clinics under the Hospital Authority from 8.30am to 9.30am on Monday to Friday (except public holidays). For details on courier services, please refer to the websites of GOGO VAN (www.gogovan.com.hk/covid-19-testing-en) and Pickupp (hk.pickupp.io/en/blog/COVID-19-sample).

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives to minimise the risk of infection. 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, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a 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 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 116 901 calls had been 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 doorknobs, 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.