

CHP conducts tests on novel coronavirus for crew members of World Dream cruise

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 8) said that as some Mainland travellers who took the World Dream cruise were earlier confirmed to have infected with the novel coronavirus, tests on novel coronavirus will be conducted on all crew members of the cruise ship to safeguard passengers on board. The tests would be completed in about four days.

A spokesman for the CHP stressed, "The health of passengers and the general public of Hong Kong is our utmost priority in making the quarantine arrangement and hence the prudent measures adopted. We fully understand the inconvenience caused by the arrangements and hope to have the understanding and co-operation of those affected in fighting against the spread of the infection together."

Personnel of the Port Health Division have earlier taken specimens from symptomatic crew members and passengers for test on novel coronavirus, with all the results being negative. However, as some crew members might have direct contact with the passengers confirmed with novel coronavirus infection (i.e. passengers who disembarked from the cruise at Nansha on January 24), upon relevant experts' advice, we have decided to conduct tests on novel coronavirus for 1 800 odd crew members on board. The aim is to exclude that they are infected and thus will not cause health threats to passengers.

Personnel of the Port Health Division have been collecting specimens from crew members for the testing since today. Owing to the vast number of crew members, it is expected that the test of crew members would be completed in about four days (i.e. February 11). Before the results are available, all people will be required to remain on the cruise ship.

This morning, the Food and Health Bureau, the DH and other relevant government departments had met with representatives from the cruise company to discuss the arrangement on board for the following four days. The cruise company will continue to provide assistance and facilitate Government's measures of disease prevention and control, as well as providing daily necessities to passengers. The medical needs of passengers will be attended to and delivery of medication to patients will be arranged, particularly to those with imminent needs. For patients with appointment with the Hospital Authority in the next few days, they may contact relevant clinics to reschedule their appointment. The Home Affairs Department has also established a 24 hour hotline (Kowloon City District Office: 2621 3400 or Kwun Tong District Office: 2756 0665) to provide assistance.

The spokesman urged, "Passengers are reminded to observe personal hygiene at all times, and that hand hygiene should be performed frequently,

especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes; before eating; after going to toilets; after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing. It is advised to 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. Gathering should be avoided and a surgical mask should be worn when staying in crowded places."

The CHP again appealed to members of the public who took the cruise since January 19 to call the CHP's hotline 2125 1122 which operates from 8am to midnight daily.