

CHP further extends Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme to cover inbound travellers under quarantine from abroad

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has announced that the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme, which provides a free testing service for COVID-19, will be further extended today (March 19) to cover asymptomatic persons under the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E), with an aim of identifying cases of COVID-19 early in order to minimise the risk of community transmission.

The Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the CHP will provide testing for 5 000 samples from the relevant persons per week. Taking reference from clinical and research statistics around the globe, the DH concurred that elderly people infected with COVID-19 usually present with a more serious clinical condition or are more prone to complications, and are thus subject to higher potential risk. Hence, persons under quarantine aged 65 or above or persons under quarantine residing with elderly persons aged 65 or above are target individuals at this stage.

Starting from this afternoon, the DH's personnel will provide a specimen container to the relevant inbound travellers at Hong Kong International Airport. They are required to collect their deep throat saliva sample in the morning on the specified collection date by themselves at home in accordance with the instructions, and to have their family members or friends deliver it to any of the 13 designated chest clinics or dermatological clinics under the DH by 1pm on the collection date. For details on collection points, please refer to www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list_of_collection_points_en.pdf.

If a sample tests positive, the CHP will notify the person concerned and arrange for admission to a public hospital for treatment as early as possible. 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 quarantine until the quarantine period ends.