

CHP investigates 14 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 12 additional Omicron cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 29, the CHP was investigating 14 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 619 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 618 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. Eleven of the cases involved mutant strains, the mutation test result of one case is pending, and the viral loads of the remaining two cases are insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise nine males and five females, aged 15 to 63. Eight of them arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and six from Group A specified places (high-risk). Ten patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and three tested positive during quarantine. The remaining patient (case 12611) is a local air crew member. He underwent medical surveillance and regular compulsory testing in accordance with the relevant requirements for exempted persons and his sample collected at a community testing centre tested positive for COVID-19. The CHP has announced the case details yesterday (December 28) (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202112/28/P2021122800615.htm).

Among the above-mentioned cases, case 12617 involves a 15-year-old female patient living at Tower 6, The Belcher's, Pok Fu Lam. She departed Hong Kong on December 15 for the United States (US). She arrived in Hong Kong on December 26 from the US by flight CX893 and tested negative upon arrival in the TSCC. According to the quarantine requirement for inbound travellers from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance, she underwent quarantine at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre for the first four days, during which her sample on December 27 tested positive. She developed symptoms on December 28 and had a Ct value of less than 30. As a prudent measure, the places where she resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period have been included in a compulsory testing notice (CTN). Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

A total of 109 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 15 to 28). One of them is an import-related case, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that cases 12578, 12579, 12581, 12582, 12583, 12584, 12585, 12586, 12588, 12591, 12593 and 12594 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron.

These cases involved four males and eight females, aged 19 to 79 years old. Ten of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC while two tested positive during quarantine.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 70 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as the passenger flights (CX881) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from Los Angeles, the US, on December 26 and 28 each had two passengers who tested positive upon arrival (a total of four passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival tests within a seven-day period), and another passenger flight (CX829) arriving in Hong Kong from Toronto, Canada, on December 28 had three 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 from Los Angeles or Toronto operated by Cathay Pacific in Hong Kong from December 29 to January 11, 2022.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local COVID-19 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 (December 30):

- On Hei House, Siu Hei Court, 201 Wu Chui Road, Tuen Mun
- One South Lane, 1 South Lane, Shek Tong Tsui
- Twilight Court, Peninsula Village, 2 Caperidge Drive, Discovery Bay, Lantau Island
- Tower 1, The SeaCrest, Hang Kwai Street, Tuen Mun

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed 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)."