

CHP investigates 19 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and six additional Omicron cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 31, the CHP was investigating 19 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 650 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 649 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases consist of 17 imported cases and two import-related cases. All of the cases involve mutant strains. The patients comprise 10 males and nine females, aged 13 to 76. Among the imported cases, nine of them arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance, and eight from Group A specified places (high-risk). Five patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport, and 12 tested positive during quarantine, among which, case 12649 is an aircrew member who is a co-worker of an earlier confirmed imported case, 12610. Also, cases 12637 and 12654 are epidemiologically linked with an earlier confirmed imported case, 12611. The CHP had announced the case details of cases 12637, 12649 and 12654 last night (December 30) (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202112/30/P2021123000898.htm).

Among the above-mentioned imported cases, three of them had stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation periods. Case 12639 involves a 15-year-old female patient, living at 56 Repulse Bay Road, Block 2, Repulse Bay. She departed Hong Kong on December 12 for the United States (US) and returned to Hong Kong on December 28 from the US by private jet. Her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. 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 29 tested positive. She developed a sore throat on the same day and her sample carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strains.

Case 12641 involves a 13-year-old male patient living at Tower 1, Kwun Lung Lau, 20 Lung Wah Street, Kennedy Town. He departed Hong Kong on December 16 for the United Kingdom (UK) after he tested negative on December 15. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 25 from the UK by flight CX252 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. According to the quarantine requirement for inbound travellers from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance, he underwent quarantine for four days at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre. He later moved to a designated quarantine hotel to continue quarantine, during which his sample on December 29 tested positive and carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strains. The patient was asymptomatic.

Case 12648 involves a 16-year-old male patient living at Block 2, Coastal Skyline, Tung Chung. He is a family member of an earlier confirmed imported case, 12624. He departed Hong Kong on December 16 for the US after he tested negative on December 16. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 28 from the US by flight CX881 with case 12624 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. As case 12624 tested positive, he was thus sent to the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre for quarantine as a close contact. His sample during quarantine on December 29 tested positive. He was asymptomatic and carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strains. He studies in the English School Foundation West Island School.

Furthermore, the CHP was notified by the Taiwan health authority on December 29 of a case confirmed in Taiwan involving a 65-year-old female patient who lives at Wharney Hotel, 57-73 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai. She travelled to Taiwan on December 14 by flight CX494 after she tested negative on December 12 in Hong Kong. Her sample taken in Taiwan on December 27 tested positive. The patient was asymptomatic. She received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (AstraZeneca) in Taiwan on July 27 and October 19.

The places where the above four patients resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation periods 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 124 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 17 to 30). 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 12601, 12602, 12603, 12604, 12605 and 12612 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. These cases involve three males and three females, aged 19 to 42 years old. Three of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC and the other three tested positive during quarantine.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 87 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

As CHP has recorded increasing number of asymptomatic and re-positive cases, with effect from January 1, 2022, CHP will further differentiate the cases which were tested positive into three categories: confirmed, asymptomatic and re-positive in the daily press release and at the CHP website.

Also, as the passenger flight (CX873) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from San Francisco, the US, on December 30 had three passengers who tested positive upon arrival, and the passenger flight (PR300) operated by Philippine Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Manila, the Philippines, on December 30 had six 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 San Francisco operated by Cathay Pacific and from Manila operated by Philippine Airlines from December 31 to January 13, 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 (January 1):

- Wing Chak House, Chak On Estate, Chak On Road, Shek Kip Mei
- Block A, Hoi Tao Building, 11 Belcher's Street, Kennedy Town

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).

â€‹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)."