

CHP investigates 80 confirmed and 40 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and identifies 21 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 29) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 29, the CHP was investigating 80 additional confirmed cases and 40 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 120 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours), and deleted a case which was considered as indeterminate after examining the clinical condition and multiple negative test results after admission to hospital. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 13 613 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 404 and seven respectively, i.e. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 14 024 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 36 imported cases, 36 cases epidemiologically linked with imported cases, two possibly import-related case, 12 local cases, and 32 cases epidemiologically linked with local cases, the remaining two cases are to be determined. One-hundred-and-one of the cases involve mutant strains, the mutation test results of 15 cases are pending and the viral load of the remaining four cases is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 59 males and 61 females, aged one-month-old to 96. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk). Case status and classification may be subject to changes when there is new information available during epidemiological investigation and latest information is shown on "COVID-19 Thematic Website".

As at 4pm today, a total of 880 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 15 to 28). Five-hundred-and-sixty-seven of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases, 40 are local cases, 117 are cases epidemiologically linked with local case, and the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 13244, 13294, 13301, 13302, 13306, 13308, 13310, 13315, 13318, 13321, 13323, 13325, 13328, 13331, 13333, 13334, 13453, 13577, 13589, 13597 and 13627 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 736 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for cases with

mutant strains, 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).

The CHP strongly reminded members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo the multiple tests on time as required. The compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well. The Government will seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months. Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). The Government reiterates that the aim of issuing a compulsory testing notice is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community as soon as possible to protect overall public health and safety.

â€‹â€‹The spokesman for the CHP stressed that 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. With the higher transmissibility and risk of infection of the Omicron mutant strain, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with the recently tightened social distancing measures, and to refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings (particularly religious or cross-family activities and gatherings). This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.