

CHP investigates additional locally acquired SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and imported cases and adjusts management of cases involving new Omicron sub-lineages

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (July 20) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, July 20, the CHP was investigating 3 625 additional locally acquired cases tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus, including 1 515 cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests (672 confirmed cases, 678 asymptomatic cases and 165 cases with pending case status) and 2 110 cases tested positive by rapid antigen tests (RATs) verified in the past 24 hours.

Separately, 180 additional imported cases were reported, including 151 cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests (10 confirmed cases, 98 asymptomatic cases and 43 cases with pending case status) and 29 cases tested positive by RATs.

Hong Kong has recorded a total of 800 794 and 504 039 cases that have tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. Please refer to the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for more information.

Meanwhile, according to the analysis by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch, as of yesterday (July 19), Hong Kong had recorded a total of 19 cases, 1 378 cases and 1 097 cases carrying the sub-lineages BA.2.12, BA.2.12.1 and BA.4/BA.5 under the Omicron mutant strain respectively (including suspected cases), among which zero, 1 149 and 403 of them are local cases.

The CHP has all along been closely monitoring local cases involving the new sub-lineages and their epidemiological characteristics. After reviewing the local cases suspected of involving the new Omicron sub-lineages, including BA.2.12.1, BA.4 and BA.5, the CHP found their characteristics, including severity and hospitalisation rate, similar to those involving BA.2 which is the widely circulating local strain since the fifth wave. The CHP will adjust the management of those cases according to the latest risk assessment. Starting today, the isolation and quarantine arrangements of local cases suspected of involving the new Omicron sub-lineages will be the same as that of cases involving BA.2, i.e., if the relevant requirements are fulfilled and their household environment is suitable, positive cases and their close contacts could opt for home isolation and quarantine.

In addition, as of 0.00am, July 20, a total of 9 232 death cases that had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded, with 9 154 and 75 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively as well as three deaths reported from the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical Centre. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 9 445 death cases that have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Furthermore, among the earlier cases by nucleic acid tests reported, there were cases (including pending cases) changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As at yesterday, the total number of confirmed cases was 347 130, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 218 869, 24 and 233 105 respectively.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that as the local situation of COVID-19 infection is still severe, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with social distancing measures, avoid going out and refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings. This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

The spokesman reminded that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. People who have yet to receive vaccination, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, should get vaccinated as early as possible for self-protection and to reduce the risk of falling seriously ill and death should they get infected.