

CHP investigates four additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and deletes five vaccine strain contamination cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, September 3, the CHP was investigating four additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and had deleted five cases compatible with vaccine strain contamination, taking the number of cases to 12 113 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 112 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases.

A spokesman for the CHP said that in view of the recent report of vaccine strain contamination related cases, the CHP has adopted a prudent approach and actively reviewed all local cases confirmed after the start of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme in February this year. The genetic analysis of the specimens conducted by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the DH revealed that the specimens of five cases, namely 11252, 11265, 11352, 11703 and 11726, were compatible with the SARS-CoV-2 vaccine strain. One of the cases (11703) had received a COVID-19 vaccine in a Community Vaccination Centre prior to testing, while the remaining four cases had visited the same clinic of a private doctor who provides COVID-19 vaccination. The five patients were all found to have negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and antibody results after admission to hospitals. After examining the clinical, epidemiological and laboratory findings, the CHP concluded these cases are compatible with vaccine strain contamination and hence have been deleted from the list of confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection in Hong Kong.

A total of 66 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (August 20 to September 2) and all of them are imported cases.

As a passenger flight (5J272) operated by Cebu Pacific Air arriving in Hong Kong from Manila, the Philippines, on September 1 had four passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing and one passenger who failed to comply with the requirements specified under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H), the DH thus invoked Cap. 599H to prohibit the landing of passenger flights from Manila operated by Cebu Pacific Air in Hong Kong from September 3 to 16.

In view of the fact that many recent imported cases have joined non-essential travel after vaccination, 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 urged 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)."

The spokesman reminded, "If travel is unavoidable, the CHP highly recommended the public to be fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccines before their departure. They should continue to wear a surgical mask and maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene at all times. Parents are also urged to avoid taking unvaccinated children travelling."

Separately, 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 days 3, 7, 12 and 19 following the announcement of the relevant confirmed cases by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day. Relevant deadlines of compulsory testing for respective specified premises are listed on the Government's website 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 compulsory testing notice tomorrow (September 4):

- Mei Yat House, Yat Tung (II) Estate, Tung Chung
- 208 Shek O Village, Shek O
- Sunrise, 3 Parkridge Crescent, Discovery Bay, Lantau Island

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 list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19 available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk). Generally speaking, vaccines can reduce the chance of transmission by those who have been vaccinated. People vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine can also generate herd immunity. Moreover, vaccination may help keep people from getting seriously ill even if they do get COVID-19.

The CHP called on members of the public to pay attention to their health condition, seek medical advice early and undergo COVID-19 nucleic acid testing as soon as possible if respiratory symptoms develop. They should also maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene at all times, to protect themselves against infection and prevent the spread of the disease in the community.

On a personal level, members of the public should put on a surgical mask when they need to go out. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask. Hand hygiene should be performed frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing. Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds, then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative. Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly.

â€‹To ensure household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) by pouring about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap). They should also pay attention to hygiene when using the toilet by putting the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs.