

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

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 27, the CHP was investigating nine additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 599 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 598 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. All of them involved mutant strains. The patients comprise five males and four females, aged 19 to 59. Five of them arrived in Hong Kong from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and four from Group A specified places (high-risk). Four patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and two tested positive during quarantine. Case 12602 is a close contact of an imported case confirmed previously (case 12586) while cases 12603 and 12604 are close contacts of another imported case confirmed previously (case 12568). All three patients tested positive at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre.

Among the above-mentioned cases, case 12602 involves a 42-year-old female patient who is a local aircrew. She lives at Tower 7, Phase 1, Park Avenue, 18 Hoi Ting Road, Mong Kok. She departed Hong Kong on December 22 for Australia, after she tested negative on December 21. She is a co-worker of an imported case confirmed earlier (case 12586) and both arrived in Hong Kong on December 24 from Australia by flight CX138. Her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative but her sample tested positive on December 25 during quarantine at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre. She is asymptomatic and her specimen carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strains. As a prudent measure, the places where the case resided or 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 101 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 13 to 26). One of them is an import-related case, while the rest are imported cases.

Furthermore, the CHP is investigating a case of COVID-19 confirmed in Shanghai involving a 26-year-old male patient who lives at Crowne Plaza Hong Kong Kowloon East. He travelled to Shanghai on December 19 by flight MU508. The latest epidemiological investigation reveals that he is asymptomatic and his sample taken in Shanghai on December 22 tested positive. The case was confirmed there on December 24. He received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (CoronaVac) in the Mainland on May 13 and June 27. The places where the

patient resided, worked and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period have been included in a CTN.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that cases 12558, 12559, 12560, 12561, 12562, 12565, 12568, 12569, 12570, 12571, 12572, 12575, 12576 and 12577 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. These cases involved eight males and six females, aged 20 to 80 years old. Nine of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC while five tested positive during quarantine.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 58 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

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 28):

- Cheung Hing Building, 44-48 Pitt Street, Yau Ma Tei
- Block 18A, Serenity Villa, 230A Tai Po Tau, Tai Po
- G/F-1/F, 392 Ho Pui Tsuen, Pat Heung, Yuen Long

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)."