

# CHP to further extend Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme

A spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) today (March 24) announced that the Centre for Health Protection will further extend its Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme, which provides a free testing service for COVID-19, to cover asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving from the United Kingdom, other countries in Europe and the United States by phases starting tomorrow (March 25), with an aim of identifying cases of COVID-19 early in order to minimise the risk of community transmission.

In response to the latest development of COVID-19, the DH will further extend the current practice of virus testing against asymptomatic inbound travellers. Starting at midnight tomorrow, a specimen container will at the first stage be provided to inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport from the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe for collecting deep throat saliva samples for relevant testing.

Inbound travellers who are provided with the specimen containers are required to collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at home in accordance with the instructions, and to have their family members or friends deliver it to any of the collection points in the same morning. Samples can be sent to 13 designated chest clinics or dermatological clinics under the DH from 9am to 11am on Monday to Sunday and some General Out-patients clinics under the Hospital Authority from 8.30am to 9.30 am on Monday to Friday (except public holiday).

If a sample tests positive, the CHP will notify the person concerned as early as possible and arrange for admission to a public hospital for treatment. In general, if no notification is received within three working days after returning a sample, it means the test result is negative and the person concerned is required to continue the quarantine until the quarantine period ends.

A spokesman for the DH urged inbound travellers who are provided with specimen containers to collect and arrange to hand in their deep throat saliva sample as early as possible so that relevant virus testing can be arranged by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch as soon as possible. This will help identify arrivals who are asymptomatic and minimise the risk of community transmission.