

# Conditional free COVID-19 testing service continues for targeted groups

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) announced today (October 29) that in view of the ongoing severe situation of COVID-19 infection around the world and the higher transmissibility of mutant strains which has a much faster rate of spread, the Government will continue to expand and strengthen the large-scale COVID-19 testing for groups of different risks, such that effective measures can be taken against the cases immediately to cut off transmission chains as quickly as possible.

The Government is progressively arranging various types of working staff with higher risk of exposure to the virus to undergo more frequent regular virus testing as a strengthened measure to guard against the importation of cases and the resurgence of local infections. The arrangement is applicable to all full-time and part-time staff of relevant industries. As the Government no longer accepts deep throat saliva specimen for compulsory or regular testing, the testing of all targeted group persons (whether they have completed a vaccination course or not) must be done by using combined nasal and throat swabs.

Eligible persons of the following high-risk and high-exposure groups can receive free tests at community testing centres (CTCs) with effect from November. Details of relevant testing arrangements are stated below:

- Starting October 20, the testing frequency for airport staff of targeted groups has been enhanced to once every three days;
- Starting November 3, working staff of CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations will be required to undergo testing once every three days (fully vaccinated persons) or on a daily basis (not fully vaccinated ones);
- Starting November 10, the testing frequency for working staff of designated quarantine hotels (DQHs), quarantine facilities and relevant designated transport will be increased to once every three days (fully vaccinated persons) or on a daily basis (not fully vaccinated ones);
- The testing frequency for designated staff of container terminals and shipping services will be increased to once every three days (fully vaccinated persons) or on a daily basis (not fully vaccinated ones). The arrangement will be implemented within November;
- Designated cold store practitioners will be required to undergo testing once every three days (fully vaccinated persons) or on a daily basis (not fully vaccinated ones). The arrangement will be implemented within November.

Persons of targeted groups eligible for receiving free COVID-19 testing at the CTCs are mainly those who are vaccinated or those who are unfit for vaccination because of health reasons. They must present valid medical certificates/vaccination records/documents of identity proof (Note) for

receiving free tests. This requirement is applicable to all targeted groups. In other words, persons of targeted groups will need to pay for the regular testing service if they do not fall under the category of being unfit for vaccination because of health reasons.

The specific requirements for eligible persons of various targeted groups (including testing frequency, specimen requirement, conditions for receiving free test) are set out in the Annex. They have to make bookings online ([www.communitytest.gov.hk/en](http://www.communitytest.gov.hk/en)) for receiving free testing service at the CTCs. Those who have no appointment or not meeting the eligibility/conditions will need to pay for the testing service at \$240. The free testing arrangement will be available until end of November.

Persons eligible for booking a free test every day (For fully vaccinated persons: every three days)

- Staff of DQHs, quarantine facilities and relevant designated transport
- Designated Staff of container terminals and shipping services
- Designated cold store practitioners
- Working staff of the CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations

Persons eligible for booking a free test every three days

- Airport staff of targeted groups
- Airport staff not under targeted groups (For fully vaccinated persons: every 14 days)

Persons eligible for booking a free test every seven days

- Staff of catering businesses and bars/pubs
- Staff of re-opened scheduled premises
- Practitioners working at Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH)

Persons eligible for booking a free test every 14 days

- Staff of designated scheduled premises and public and private swimming pools/beaches, and performers not wearing a mask in places of public entertainment and event premises (For staff of individual premises operating under certain modes or capacities: every seven days)
- Construction site personnel
- School staff

Other persons eligible for booking a free test

- Working staff accompanying and receiving local group tours (To undergo one test within seven days before the tour, and no more than one free test every seven days)
- Staff members of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes who are fully vaccinated can continue to receive a free test every seven days on a voluntary basis to safeguard their health and that of their families and co-workers

- Personnel working in markets, licensed hawkers and fully vaccinated practitioners working at SSSH can continue to receive a free test every 28 days on a voluntary basis to safeguard their health and that of their families and co-workers

The Government regularly reviews the coverage and frequency of targeted group testing and if such testing should be publicly funded based on the latest epidemic risk assessment. A spokesman for the FHB said that the provision of free tests for targeted groups involves the use of public resources. Given that the Government must uphold the principle of effective use of resources, public money should only be used to subsidise individual eligible persons for taking nucleic acid tests in very exceptional situations.

The spokesman reiterated that the two vaccines currently recognised in Hong Kong are safe and effective, giving protection to the vaccinated persons and those around them. The vaccines have been received by billions of people worldwide and getting vaccination is the best way to fight the virus. Except for those with contraindications, most people are fit for vaccination. Currently, all Hong Kong residents aged 12 or above are eligible for receiving free vaccination. The Government calls on the public to treasure the vaccine supply in Hong Kong and get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Note:

(i) Persons who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination because of health reasons are required to present a relevant medical certificate;

(ii) persons who are vaccinated (i.e. have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, or received the second dose but not yet passed 14 days, or completed a vaccination course of two doses) should present relevant vaccination record (such as by downloading their electronic vaccination records or saving the printouts of their vaccination records to their mobile phones, or bringing along the printouts or copies of their vaccination records); and

(iii) certain groups should also present card/letter/document proof issued by relevant organisations for verification of identity.