

DH sets up temporary specimen collection centre to speed up specimen collection from inbound travellers from overseas

The Department of Health will set up a temporary specimen collection centre at the AsiaWorld-Expo tomorrow (March 26) to speed up the collection of specimen from inbound travellers from overseas for conducting testing for COVID-19 and facilitate those who have difficulty in arranging family members or friends to submit their specimen.

Starting at midnight today (March 25), the CHP has extended its Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme to provide free testing for COVID-19 to asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving from the United Kingdom and other countries in Europe. With its smooth operation, the programme has further been extended to cover asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving from the United States this afternoon.

The DH's temporary specimen collection centre will operate from 7.30am to 11pm daily. Inbound travellers will be provided with a specimen collection container at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA). Starting tomorrow, they can choose to take shuttle bus from the HKIA immediately to the temporary specimen collection centre to collect their deep throat saliva sample there in accordance with the instructions and submit it to the DH personnel on duty at the venue. Afterwards, they have to go to their accommodation for the compulsory quarantine as soon as possible by their own means. Otherwise, they should collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at home on a designated date, and ask 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-patient clinics under the Hospital Authority from 8.30am to 9.30am 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 choose to collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at home to collect and arrange to hand in their 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 asymptomatic patients and minimise the risk of community transmission.