

DH strengthens health quarantine and testing arrangements for inbound travellers

The Department of Health (DH) will strengthen health quarantine and COVID-19 testing arrangements for all inbound travellers starting tomorrow (April 8). All asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) will be mandated under the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) to collect their deep throat saliva samples at the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at the AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) for conducting testing for COVID-19.

From tomorrow onwards, inbound travellers from all flights are required to take shuttle bus from the HKIA immediately to the venue mentioned above to collect their deep throat saliva samples in accordance with the instructions and submit the samples to the DH personnel on duty at the venue for conducting testing for COVID-19. Afterwards, they have to go to their accommodation for the compulsory quarantine as soon as possible by their own means.

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 compulsory quarantine until the quarantine period ends.

Taking reference from the testing arrangements for Peru returnees by chartered flights, the DH considered that the arrangement to let travellers from places with higher risk to wait for test results at the Specimen Collection Centre could efficiently identify confirmed patients and arrange to send their close contacts to quarantine centres. As 248 cases (69.1 per cent) of the 359 imported cases recorded in the past 14 days (March 25 to April 7) involved people who had been to the United Kingdom (UK), the DH has decided to adopt the same testing arrangement for inbound travellers from the UK after assessing venue restrictions and relevant infection control risks.

From April 9 onwards, asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving on flights from the UK are required to proceed to the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre to collect their deep throat saliva samples and wait for the test results there. If tested positive, they will be arranged for admission to hospital for treatment while the close contacts who travelled with them will be sent to designated quarantine centres. For those who are tested negative, they can go home or to a designated place to continue completion of the 14-day compulsory quarantine.

As the testing takes time, the people concerned might need to stay at

the venue to wait for 8 hours or more and those arriving at night might have to wait longer. The DH urged for the understanding and patience from inbound travellers on the arrangement.

Starting tomorrow, the Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme will also be further extended to inbound travellers who have been to Hubei Province in the past 14 days arriving via land boundary control points (Shenzhen Bay Port and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port). Specimen collection containers will be provided by DH staff to these travellers for collection of their deep throat saliva samples for testing when they are undergoing compulsory home quarantine. They 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.

The collection points of the samples are 13 designated chest clinics or dermatological clinics under the DH from 9am to 11am on Monday to Sunday and also some general out-patient clinics under the Hospital Authority from 8.30am to 9.30am on Monday to Friday (except public holiday).