

# FHB thanks FDHs for co-operation in compulsory testing

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) thanked foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) and employers for their co-operation in undergoing compulsory testing for fighting the virus together today (May 9).

During the period from May 1 up to 6pm today, nearly 340 000 FDHs have been tested at 21 community testing centres (CTCs) and mobile specimen collection stations or submitted deep throat saliva specimen. Moreover, it is estimated that around 40 000 FDHs have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine, such that they are exempt from compulsory testing.

The Government has been adopting the new direction for fighting the pandemic since mid-April. Targeted border control and infection control measures were introduced to safeguard Hong Kong against imported cases and prevent cases from spreading locally.

The spokesman said, "For local cases with unknown sources of infection involving mutant strains, the Government has to be decisive in adopting swiftly stringent testing and quarantine measures, with an aim to cutting the transmission chains as soon as possible. Otherwise, the whole society will have to bear significant consequence when there is a major outbreak."

Testing has been an integral part of the strategy in preventing and fighting the virus. The Government has been implementing the Targeted Group Testing Scheme for high-risk and high-exposure groups and essential staff of critical infrastructure and services, etc since mid-2020. Around 3.4 million tests have been conducted so far. Among them, all FDHs were offered a one-off free test on a voluntary basis at CTCs from mid-December 2020 to end February this year. Over 34 000 FDHs, equivalent to less than 10 per cent of the total number of FDHs in Hong Kong, had received voluntary testing at CTCs during the period. Under the new direction for fighting the pandemic, high-risk or high-exposure groups such as staff members of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes, as well as most of the frontline staff of catering businesses, are required to undergo regular testing if they have not completed a COVID-19 vaccination course.

"The Government requested on April 30 that all FDHs in Hong Kong who had yet to complete a COVID-19 vaccination course to receive testing on a compulsory basis on or before May 9. In accordance with the established practice, the relevant decision was made solely on public health grounds after detailed risk assessment. The factors that have been taken into account include that two recent cases involving N501Y mutant strain were FDHs, the transmissibility of mutant strains is higher, the sources of infection of the cases were not known, and that the confirmed case had gatherings and contacts with other FDHs during the incubation and infection periods, etc.

"In view of the surge in testing demand within a short period of time, the Government has substantially increased the booking quotas of 21 CTCs, set up additional mobile specimen collection stations in various districts and extended the service period of mobile stations. The Government would like to express gratitude to all those who received test, including FDHs, for their patience and understanding, and to frontline staff including staff of service providers, relevant government departments and venues for their full co-operation. The Government and service providers will continue to serve the public with concerted efforts and ensure the quality of testing at the same time. We also encourage them to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and their family members."

"In view of the threat posed by the mutant strains, it is imperative for us to get vaccinated. While there is still shortage in COVID-19 vaccines internationally, the two vaccines procured by the Government are sufficient for all Hong Kong people to get vaccinated. At present, there are still plenty of unutilised quotas in the 29 community vaccination centres and over 1000 private clinics. We call on the public to treasure the vaccine supply in Hong Kong and get vaccinated as soon as possible."