

Free COVID-19 testing service provided for targeted groups at community testing centres

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) announced today (May 15) that the Government will continue to provide free COVID-19 testing service at community testing centres (CTCs) for persons of the following targeted groups who have yet to complete a COVID-19 vaccination course or are unfit for vaccination because of health reasons. Eligible persons may continue to make booking online for free testing service at the CTCs.

Persons eligible for booking a free test every seven days

â–€ Staff of catering businesses and scheduled premises

â–€ Staff of quarantine hotels

Persons eligible for booking a free test every 14 days

â–€ Construction site personnel (including registered construction workers and other resident site personnel) *

â–€ Staff of public and private swimming pools / beaches

â–€ Staff of specified hotels

Other persons eligible for booking a free test

â–€ Working staff accompanying and receiving local group tours (including tourist guides, tour escorts, staff seeing off the groups, drivers of chartered tour coaches and crew of chartered ferries) *

(within seven days before the tour, and not more than one free test every seven days)

* With effect from May 24, (i) persons who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination because of health reasons are required to present a relevant medical certificate; and (ii) persons who have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine 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).

A spokesman for the FHB said, "The Government started to provide one-off free COVID-19 testing service to targeted groups at the CTCs through online booking last year. The response has been positive. In the light of the ongoing epidemic situation in Hong Kong, we consider it necessary to extend the relevant testing arrangements.

"Since the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme at the end of February, as of yesterday, more than 1.13 million and over 0.75 million persons have received their first and second dose of vaccine respectively. Having considered the protection brought by the vaccination, the relevant staff member will no longer need to undergo regular testing

after 14 days upon his or her completion of the necessary doses of vaccine.

"In view of the latest local epidemic development, including local cases involving mutant strains with unknown sources, the Government has adopted stringent testing measures, including requiring all foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong to undergo two rounds of compulsory testing, and all residents in the buildings with cases involving mutant strains to undergo multiple compulsory tests. Since January this year, a total of some 11 million tests were conducted via various testing channels, marking an average of over 80 000 tests per day. Among which, construction site personnel, staff of catering businesses and staff of scheduled premises have taken 870 000, 850 000 and 280 000 tests at the CTCs respectively. We need to reserve sufficient testing capacity at the CTCs to meet unexpected testing demand in an efficient and flexible manner for strengthening disease prevention and control in Hong Kong. For certain targeted groups, the free testing service offered at the CTCs will only be open to persons who are unfit to receive vaccination because of health reasons, or those who yet to receive the second dose of vaccine (hence not qualified for the exemption from regular testing).

"The free testing service at the CTCs for the aforementioned targeted groups will be available until end of June. We encourage persons of eligible targeted groups to actively receive free testing in order to safeguard their health and that of their families and co-workers. Eligible persons can choose a suitable time slot for testing taking into account their own needs. If they have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo free testing provided by the Government as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the community testing centres."

Eligible persons should make advance booking for the free testing service via the community testing centre booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk). Those who have no appointment will need to pay for the testing service at \$240. With effect from May 24, construction site personnel and working staff of local group tours who are unable to present the aforementioned medical certificate or vaccination record will also have to pay for the testing service.

The CTCs open daily from 8am to 1.30pm and from 2.30pm to 8pm. Deep cleaning and disinfection will be conducted when the testing centres close in the afternoon and at night. When arriving at the CTCs at the designated time slot, eligible persons should present identity document used at the time of booking (such as Hong Kong identity card or passport) and the SMS booking confirmation. For verification purpose, construction site personnel should also present their construction worker registration card issued by the Construction Industry Council or a letter issued by their main contractor as an identity proof for them being the resident site personnel of the respective site.

Participants will be notified by SMS through their mobile phones if the test result is negative. Should any specimen be tested preliminary positive, it will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Department of Health (DH) for a confirmatory test. Confirmed cases will be

followed up and announced by the Centre for Health Protection of the DH.

Apart from attending the CTCs for testing, citizens can continue to utilise other free testing channels provided by the Government, including attending mobile specimen collection stations (if service scope is applicable) for free testing. For details on testing means other than the CTCs, please refer to the following webpage:
www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html.

The spokesman reiterated that receiving COVID-19 vaccination is the most effective measure in the prevention and control of the epidemic which can help the public resume normal daily lives. Most people are fit for getting vaccinated, and currently all Hong Kong residents aged 16 or above are eligible for receiving free vaccination.

The Government will regularly review the coverage of testing for relevant targeted groups based on the latest epidemic risk assessment.