

Government announces criteria for discharge from isolation for infected persons

The Government announced the criteria for discharge from isolation for persons infected with COVID-19, with a view to making proper use of community isolation facilities (CIF), prioritising the processing of more imminent cases and reducing the potential transmission risks brought by the cases as far as possible.

The Hospital Authority (HA) is striving to send infected persons with higher risks to hospitals as early as practicable, whereas infected persons with no or mild symptoms will be sent to CIF whenever possible. In this connection, the HA and the Department of Health have earlier sought advice from experts and decided to adopt a risk-based strategy in suitably adjusting the duration of stay for infected persons in CIF.

Amongst the persons sent to CIF, those in suitable household conditions (e.g. living alone or do not have household members who are high-risk individuals, such as the elderly, pregnant women or immunocompromised persons) will be tested on Day 7 after positive nucleic acid test result (the day following testing or collection of sample is counted as Day 1; if there is no such testing or collection record, the day on receiving the test result is counted as Day 1) –

(a) Should the Day 7 test result be negative, these persons may return home and stay there until Day 14 for further testing. If the result is again negative, they may leave home and continue with their daily activities. If the Day 14 test result is positive, they will need to stay home and conduct daily tests until a negative result is obtained. Only by then can they leave home and continue with their daily activities.

(b) Should the Day 7 test result be positive, these persons will need to stay at CIF until Day 14 for further testing. If the result is negative, they may leave CIF and continue with their daily activities. If the Day 14 test result is still positive, they will need to stay at CIF and conduct daily tests until a negative result is obtained. Only by then can they leave CIF and continue with their daily activities.

For those in unsuitable household conditions (e.g. household members comprise some high-risk individuals), they will be tested on Day 14 after a positive nucleic acid test result was obtained. If the Day 14 test result is negative, they may leave CIF and continue with their daily activities. If the Day 14 test result is positive, they will need to stay at CIF and conduct daily tests until a negative result is obtained. Only by then can they leave CIF and continue with their daily activities.

According to the existing arrangements, the above testing requirements may be fulfilled by conducting Rapid Antigen Test. In consultation with experts, the Government will keep in view of the epidemic development and changes in risk level to adjust the criteria for discharge from isolation for infected persons in a timely manner.

As for persons admitted to hospitals, relevant cases will be handled by the HA and the specific discharge criteria will be subject to the professional judgment of medical practitioners. At present, persons admitted to hospitals who no longer show symptoms may be discharged to home, in general the earliest, on Day 7 after positive nucleic acid test result, provided that they have obtained a negative result by then. They will need to stay home until Day 14 for further testing. If the Day 14 test result is still negative, they can leave home and continue with their daily activities.