

Government consolidates testing requirements for persons arriving from places in China at different boundary control points

The Government announced today (March 31) that the COVID-19 nucleic acid testing arrangements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from places in China (including the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan) will be adjusted from April 1 to tally the relevant testing requirements.

Currently, the testing arrangements vary for persons arriving from different places in China at different boundary control points. For the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA), all travellers arriving at Hong Kong via the HKIA are subject to the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival, while travellers arriving from places in China will be given a specimen collection bottle for deep throat saliva sample collection for testing again on the 12th day of their arrival at Hong Kong.

As for land boundary control points, persons exempted from compulsory quarantine and Hong Kong residents arriving at Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme are required to conduct COVID-19 nucleic acid tests within three days prior to their arrival at Hong Kong and present the negative test result. Under specific circumstances, such as for persons who had stayed in designated places in the Mainland, they would also be given specimen collection bottles to collect deep throat saliva samples for testing on the 2nd and 12th day of their arrival at Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said, "The differing testing arrangements mentioned above may cause inconvenience to residents and travellers. To avoid confusion, the Government will tally the post-arrival testing arrangements at different control points, and require persons arriving at Hong Kong from places in China on or after April 1, 2021, to undergo testing on arrival/the 2nd day of arrival at Hong Kong and on the 12th day of their arrival."

The Government will gazette a compulsory testing notice under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J). According to the compulsory testing notice, any person aged six or above who arrives at Hong Kong on or after April 1, 2021, via any land boundary control point and is placed under quarantine under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), as well as any person arriving at Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme and are hence exempted from compulsory quarantine, must undergo testing on the 2nd and 12th day following the person's arrival at Hong Kong. At the same time, any person who arrives at Hong Kong via the HKIA and is placed under quarantine pursuant to Cap. 599C must also undergo testing on the 12th day following the person's arrival at Hong Kong in addition to the

"test-and-hold" arrangement on the day of arrival. The Government will amend the relevant exemption conditions imposed on exempted persons by including the post-arrival test requirement as one of the exemption conditions.

The 2nd and 12th day following a person's arrival at Hong Kong are counted with the day of arrival as the 1st day. For example, for a person who arrived at Hong Kong on April 1, 2021, he/she should undergo the 2nd day test on April 2, 2021 and the 12th day test on April 12, 2021.

Port Health staff will distribute specimen collection bottles to the persons subject to the compulsory testing requirements mentioned above when they arrive at Hong Kong. The relevant persons subject to compulsory testing should collect deep throat saliva samples using the specimen bottles as per the guidelines on the 2nd and/or 12th day following their arrival in Hong Kong, and return the specimen collection bottles by the same day. If necessary, the relevant persons subject to compulsory testing may also choose to obtain the specimen collection bottles from one of the 121 post offices, 47 general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority or vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations via family or friends. For persons not subject to compulsory quarantine (i.e. persons arriving at Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme or persons exempted from compulsory quarantine), they may alternatively undergo the specified tests by attending Community Testing Centres on the 2nd and 12th day of their arrival at Hong Kong. The persons subject to testing must keep the SMS notifications containing results of the test for checking when a prescribed officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901 which operates from 9am to 6pm.

The Government will verify whether the relevant persons had complied with the compulsory testing notice. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notice commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him/her to undergo testing within a specified timeframe. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.