

Government continues to provide free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing service for the elderly and targeted groups

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) announced today (April 30) that free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing service is being provided for eligible persons of high-risk/high-exposure targeted groups and all elderly people aged 60 or above at community testing centres (CTCs) and mobile specimen collection stations so as to achieve the goal of "early identification, early isolation and early treatment" and enable more vulnerable infected elderly to seek timely medical attention and be prescribed with treatment drugs.

To encourage the elderly to undergo frequent COVID-19 testing for effective and early identification of infected persons, the Government has extended the free COVID-19 nucleic acid test service to elderly people aged 60 or above. They can undergo free COVID-19 nucleic acid test with swab samples collected by professionals at around 100 CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations in various districts of Hong Kong without the need for booking in advance. Elderly people tested negative (whether by rapid antigen test (RAT) or nucleic acid test) should seize the time and visit any nearby community vaccination centres to get vaccinated immediately under the "same-day tickets" arrangement, via private doctors and clinics offering vaccination service or at mobile vaccination stations. Details on vaccination service can be found on the Government's thematic website for the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/en), or they can solicit assistance from family and friends, district organisations or elderly service institutions to make enquiry and arrangement.

Meanwhile, the Government continues to conduct large-scale COVID-19 testing for staff of individual sectors under high-risk/high-exposure groups (targeted group persons) in order to cut off transmission chains as quickly as possible and allow normal operation of the relevant industries. The regular compulsory testing of all targeted group persons, whether they have completed a vaccination course or not, must be done by using combined nasal and throat swabs collected by professionals. The arrangement is applicable to all full-time and part-time staff of relevant industries. Given the higher infection risks of targeted group persons, only those who have tested positive in the past month (including positive cases tested either by nucleic acid tests recorded by the Department of Health (DH) or by RATs that have been self-declared to the DH) can be temporarily exempted from undergoing the above regular nucleic acid compulsory testing.

In general, only targeted group persons who are vaccinated or those who are unfit for vaccination because of health reasons are eligible for receiving free COVID-19 testing at CTCs. They must present valid medical certificates/vaccination records/documents of identity proof (see Notes) for receiving free tests. In other words, persons of targeted groups will need to pay \$240 for the regular testing service if they do not fall under the

category of being unfit for vaccination because of health reasons. The specific requirements for eligible persons of various targeted groups (including testing frequency, specimen requirement, conditions for receiving free test) are set out in the Annex.

A spokesman for the FHB said, "As the implementation of stage three Vaccine Pass will be advanced to start on May 31, all eligible citizens (except certain special groups like recovered persons) should get vaccinated with three doses before the deadline. The Government will also consider updating the vaccination requirements of targeted group persons in accordance with the implementation timetable of Vaccine Pass. In other words, the Government is considering that with effect from May 31, only targeted group persons vaccinated with three doses will not be required to undergo regular or such frequent testing. Details will be announced later."

Moreover, the CTCs continue to provide free voluntary nucleic acid testing service for staff members of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes who are fully vaccinated (can receive a free nucleic acid test every seven days on a voluntary basis) and personnel working in public markets and licensed hawkers (can receive a free nucleic acid test every 28 days on a voluntary basis).

The free testing arrangement will be available until further notice. The specific requirements for eligible persons of various targeted groups (including testing frequency, specimen requirement, conditions for receiving free test) will be uploaded on the [COVID-19 thematic website](#) for reference. Persons concerned should also refer to the announcements made by relevant bureaux/departments regarding the latest testing frequencies and corresponding requirements of their targeted groups so as to ensure that they have undergone the testing in compliance with the requirements.

Notes:

(i) Persons who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination because of health reasons are required to present a relevant medical certificate;

(ii) persons who are vaccinated (i.e. have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, or received the second dose but have not yet passed 14 days, or completed a vaccination course of two doses) should present a 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); and

(iii) certain groups should also present card/letter/document proof issued by relevant organisations for verification of identity.