

Government encourages use of community testing centres and mobile specimen collection stations for testing

The Government has all along been providing convenient testing services to the public through various channels, including a free testing service, and encouraging the public to make good use of various means such as community testing centres and mobile specimen collection stations in various districts for testing, with a view to achieving "early identification, early isolation and early treatment", and cutting transmission chains in the community as early as possible.

The Government had earlier announced the decision to extend the operation period of 18 community testing centres (CTCs) after reviewing the usage of the CTCs and public's demand for the testing service.

Having gone through a competitive procurement process, the 18 CTCs with extended operation will be operated by nine contractors, all of which are laboratories on the "Local COVID-19 nucleic acid testing institutions recognised by the Hong Kong SAR Government" list maintained by the Department of Health (DH). The contractors have all passed the External Quality Assessment Programme for COVID-19 testing of the DH and possess relevant laboratory accreditation. The Government has also taken into due consideration various factors such as the testing capacity, past experience and performance of the testing agencies in the course of the competitive procurement process.

Booking and walk-in services are available at CTCs. The 24-hour booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en) shows the booking status of testing centres for the coming one to two weeks, and members of the public can choose the testing centre and time slot suitable for them. The centres would accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. Members of the public may check the booking status online or call the centres for enquiries on the availability of booking or walk-in quotas before visiting. The locations, responsible agencies and hotlines of the 18 CTCs with extended operation are in Annex 1.

CTCs across the territory provide self-paid testing services to the public for general community or private purposes (such as certifications for travelling or work); and free testing services for persons subject to compulsory testing or targeted groups requiring testing. At present, persons of certain targeted groups (including employees of scheduled premises and catering businesses, construction site personnel, etc.), persons subject to compulsory testing, as well as persons with "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification may receive free testing at CTCs. A list of such eligible persons is in Annex 2.

Moreover, over a dozen mobile specimen collection stations in various districts are in operation to provide a free testing service to the public (see the locations and service scope at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/station/). Some of them are dedicated to providing free services to staff of catering businesses and scheduled premises, and persons subject to compulsory testing. The Government will adjust mobile specimen collection stations in accordance with the development of the epidemic and actual circumstances to meet public demand.

To enable the working population to undergo testing on their rest days or before/after work, the CTCs are open daily from 8am to 1.30pm and from 2.30pm to 8pm, even on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Meanwhile, mobile specimen collection stations are generally open daily from 10am to 8pm.

The Government reminds the public that they can undergo COVID-19 testing through various means. For details, please refer to the following webpage: www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html. Individuals with symptoms should seek medical advice from doctors promptly and should not attend the CTCs or mobile specimen collection stations. Other than the Accident and Emergency Departments of public hospitals and general outpatient clinics, persons with symptoms may visit private clinics and hospitals and undergo testing as instructed by medical professionals in order to receive an early and appropriate diagnosis and treatment.