

Government enhances distribution arrangement of free rapid antigen test kits to elderly persons

The Government started on April 19 the distribution of free rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to elderly persons aged 60 or above through various service units so as to support the elderly in getting used to self-administering RAT for early identification of infected persons and cutting the virus transmission chains in the community, with a view to achieving the goal of "early identification, early isolation and early treatment". A total of some 400 000 RAT kits was distributed to the elderly in the first two days.

The Government has observed long queues at a number of service units. Also, some elderly persons expressed that they were unable to collect the RAT kits as they are neither members nor service users of the relevant service units.

To address the situation concerned, the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) has immediately arranged logistics to provide stock replenishment to individual service units these few days. More frequent logistical support will also be arranged in the future to avoid the circumstance in which the elderly are unable to get the RAT kits. In addition, individual service units will have the following arrangements in place to facilitate the collection of RAT kits by the elderly in need:

(1) Following service units will provide free RAT kits to all elderly persons aged 60 or above (including members and non-members):

- Two District Health Centres (DHC) and 11 DHC Expresses under the Primary Healthcare Office of the FHB;
- 14 Elderly Health Centres under the Department of Health;
- 213 District Elderly Community Centres/Neighbourhood Elderly Centres/Social Centres for the Elderly subsidised by the Social Welfare Department (SWD); and
- 18 district-based Chinese Medicine Clinics cum Training and Research Centres operating on a tripartite collaboration model involving the Hospital Authority, non-government organisations and a local university

(2) Elderly persons who do not hold membership from any of the aforementioned service units are required to collect the RAT kits in person and bring along any documents for age proof, such as identification documents, Senior Citizen Card or JoyYou Card for verification purpose

(3) In view of the service operation mode, the Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly, Integrated Home Care Services Teams, Enhanced Home and Community Care Services Teams and Recognised Service Providers of the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly subsidised by the SWD will

only provide free RAT kits to their respective members and service users aged 60 or above

(4) To ensure more elderly persons in need can receive the RAT kits, each person should only collect a total of 5 sets of free RAT kits once a day. Collection of RAT kits on behalf of other persons is not allowed

The arrangement of distributing free RAT kits to the elderly will continue until end-May. There is no need for elderly persons to rush their collection of RAT kits these few days nor stockpile the RAT kits.

A spokesman for the FHB said that the elderly have higher infection risks and are more prone to serious illness or even death if infected. The elderly should undergo frequent testing so that they can receive appropriate and timely treatment if infected with COVID-19. The Government strongly appeals to the elderly to make good use of the supplies concerned and get familiar with using RAT kits for frequent self-monitoring of their own health conditions.

The Government is also providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing service to all elderly people aged 70 or above at community testing centres (CTCs) and mobile specimen collection stations. No advance booking is needed for the elderly. For locations of the CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations, please browse www.communitytest.gov.hk.