

Government enhances virus testing for high-risk and high-exposure groups

The Government announced today (October 28) that staff of high-risk and high-exposure groups will be required to undergo more frequent regular virus testing as a way to counter the latest development of the COVID-19 epidemic and mutant strains, and also as a more stringent anti-epidemic measure to complement the proactive "zero infection" strategy. In addition to airport staff of targeted groups who have started to undergo testing every three days recently, healthcare staff handling COVID-19 cases in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre (HKICC) also need to be tested every three days, whereas staff of other high-risk and high-exposure groups will be progressively arranged to undergo more frequent testing.

Targeted and strategic virus testing is crucial to anti-epidemic work. In view of the ongoing severe situation of COVID-19 infection around the world and the higher transmissibility of mutant strains which has a much faster rate of spread, the Government will progressively arrange various types of working staff with higher risk of exposure to the virus to undergo regular virus testing more frequently as a strengthened measure to guard against the importation of cases and the resurgence of local infections. The arrangement is applicable to all full-time and part-time staff of relevant industries. Staff who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course are required to undergo a nucleic acid test every three days while those who have not yet completed a vaccination course (such as those who are unfit to receive vaccination at the moment because of health reasons) are required to get tested on a daily basis.

Following the change in testing frequency for airport staff of targeted groups from every seven days previously to every three days since last Wednesday (October 20), healthcare staff handling COVID-19 cases in the North Lantau Hospital HKICC also have to undergo a nucleic acid test every three days starting yesterday (October 27). It should be noted that all staff of these two groups have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course.

The Government is progressively arranging an increase in testing frequency for other working staff of high-risk and high-exposure groups, requiring them to undergo testing every three days at a minimum (or on a daily basis for those who have not yet completed a vaccination course). The enhanced testing arrangement is expected to be implemented consecutively within the coming month for groups such as the working staff of designated quarantine hotels, quarantine facilities and relevant designated transport, cold store practitioners, staff of designated container terminal and shipping services, and working staff of community testing centres. The enhancement in testing enables staff who are unavoidably exposed to higher infection risks during work to return to the community safely after work and offer protection to their families and friends in daily life.