

Government follows up on positive results of sewage surveillance and appeals to residents to undergo virus testing

The Government announced today (February 16) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Drainage Services Department in collaboration with the cross-disciplinary team of the University of Hong Kong had strengthened the sampling of sewage for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in many areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results in Sham Shui Po, Sha Tin and Yuen Long Districts, the Home Affairs Department (Sham Shui Po District Office) will distribute COVID-19 rapid test kits to residents and all cleansing workers and property management staff working in the following area (see Annex) starting from tomorrow (February 17) for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identifying infected persons –

- Sewage Testing Area Sham Shui Po Site 4A (Part) – Shek Kip Mei Estate Ancillary Facilities Block (The Methodist Church, Hong Kong Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service Sham Shui Po Nursing Home cum Day Care Service; Po Leung Kuk Sham Shui Po Integrated Rehabilitation Centre; The Neighborhood Advice-Action Council, Shamshuipo District Elderly Community Centre; and Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong Shek Kip Mei Centre)

In addition, the Home Affairs Department (including Sham Shui Po, Sha Tin and Yuen Long District Offices) will distribute COVID-19 rapid test kits to all cleansing workers and property management staff working in the following areas (see Annex) starting from tomorrow (February 17) for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identifying infected persons. The Government appeals to residents and those working in these areas who have been exposed to infection risks to undergo testing on a voluntary basis to achieve "early identification, early isolation and early treatment".

- Sewage Testing Area Sham Shui Po Site 4A (Part) – Shek Kip Mei Estate
- Sewage Testing Area Sha Tin Site 9A – Shui Chuen O Estate
- Sewage Testing Area Yuen Long Site 3-6 (Part)– Tin Shing Court
- Sewage Testing Area Yuen Long Site 3-7 (Part) – Ping Yan Court

Members of the public may refer to (www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzFAUzTtmKk) for enquiries relating to the use of the rapid test kits.

When using a rapid test kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

Since rapid antigen testing can only serve as a reference, it cannot replace the nucleic acid testing that is at present the gold standard for diagnosis of COVID-19. When positive result is obtained in a rapid test, one should further undergo nucleic acid testing for confirmation. For the sake of prudence, they should take personal protective measures, stay home and avoid going out as far as practicable. They should invite relatives or friends to obtain and deliver deep throat saliva specimen collection packs through existing channels. If the result is still positive, the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority will treat the case as tested positive/preliminarily positive under the mechanism. Should these persons begin to develop symptoms before results are available, they may consult their family doctors for advice according to their needs. When severe symptoms (e.g. prolonged fever at 38 degrees Celsius or above, or signs such as shortness of breath, palpitations, chest pain) are developed, members of the public are urged to call the 999 hotline for arranging ambulance transfer to hospital as early as possible.