

Government follows up on positive sewage testing results and urges public to undergo testing

The Government announced today (January 28) that testing arrangement would be stepped up in light of the sewage samples collected in various districts being tested positive for COVID-19 virus. Residents and workers of relevant areas are urged to undergo testing as soon as possible to help cut the silent transmission chains and achieve "early identification, early isolation and early treatment".

A Government spokesman said, "Sewage surveillance through testing sewage samples collected in different districts has been an integral part of the anti-epidemic strategy, facilitating the effective monitoring of virus spread in the community. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Drainage Services Department (DSD) worked in collaboration with the cross-disciplinary team of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and recently detected positive testing results of samples collected in a number of districts, indicating a certain viral load contained in the sewage. To enable more members of the public to undergo testing so as to identify asymptomatic patients, the Government will issue compulsory testing notice, distribute COVID-19 rapid test kits, set up mobile testing stations, etc, in relevant areas according to the level of infection risk."

Compulsory testing

In response to the positive sewage testing results in Sha Tin and Tung Chung, the Government exercises the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publishes in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, requiring any person who had been present at the following specified premises during the specified period to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test –

- Sha Tin: Pok Chi House, Pok Yat House and Pok Tai House in Pok Hong Estate
- Tung Chung: Tower 16, Crystal Cove, Caribbean Coast Phase IV
- Tung Chung: Caribbean Square, 1 Kin Tung Road

The Government strongly reminds members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo testing on time as required. The above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well. They are advised to closely monitor their health conditions. They should seek medical attention and undergo testing even if they have only mild symptoms.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are available on the website of

the Centre for Health Protection, the Department of Health
via www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ctn_20220127.pdf.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results identified in Yuen Long, the Home Affairs Department (including Yuen Long District Office) will distribute COVID-19 rapid test kits to residents in Yuen Long Site 4A (see Annex) from today for them to take the test on their own, in the hope of identifying infected persons early.

Residents may call the hotline at 3700 8888 for enquiries relating to the use of the rapid test kits. Should positive test results is shown on the test kit, user should seek medical attention at the Accident and Emergency Departments promptly, so that appropriate diagnosis and treatment can be given at the earliest possible time. Residents should stay home as far as possible and avoid going out apart from seeking medical consultation in order to prevent the virus from spreading in the community. The spokesman stressed that rapid test kit testing is not a substitute for the compulsory testing requirement. Individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, have visited places with epidemic outbreaks or have been in contact with infected persons tested positive, etc, should undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test promptly.

Since October 2020, the Government has been collecting sewage samples across the city for sewage surveillance. The EPD, the DSD and the cross-disciplinary team of the HKU will continue to conduct sewage testing in all districts in Hong Kong to ascertain the sources of the virus.