

Government gazettes compulsory testing notice

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, which requires any person who had been present at 62 specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

In view of one local case, three import-related cases, one non-locally confirmed case who had stayed in Hong Kong and five cases tested preliminarily positive, 26 specified premises are included in the compulsory testing notice. Also, in view some of the hamster samples of a pet shop tested positive earlier, 36 specified premises are included in the compulsory testing notice. The Government strongly reminds members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo the multiple tests 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 Centre for Health Protection (CHP)'s website via the following link:
(www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/ctn_20220118.pdf).

Furthermore, in order to further reduce the potential risk of transmission, any person who had come into contact with or handled hamster(s) delivered to Hong Kong from overseas on or after December 22, 2021 (including but not limited to (1) persons involved in the delivery or temporary storage of such hamster(s), (2) persons who had handled the quarantine of such hamster(s), or (3) full-time, part-time and relief staff of pet shops in possession of such hamster(s)); or had come into contact with or handled hamster(s) which were purchased by, possessed by or under the custody of the such persons on or after December 22, 2021 (including but not limited to (1) persons who purchased, are in possession of or have custody of hamster(s) on or after December, 22 2021 and (2) the household member(s) residing with such persons), has to undergo testing on January 18 or 19; January 22; and January 25.

Persons subject to compulsory testing in accordance with a compulsory testing notice must go to any of the mobile specimen collection stations, community testing centres (CTCs) or recognised local medical testing institutions to undergo professional swab sampling in fulfilling the requirements for compulsory testing. Young children may continue to undergo the test using a stool specimen.

If Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above, the Red or Black

Rainstorm Warning Signal or the post-super typhoon "extreme conditions" announcement by the Government is in force at any time during the period for undergoing the compulsory testing, the period for undergoing the compulsory testing will be further extended for one day.

The Comirnaty and CoronaVac vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from COVID-19. They can provide protection to those vaccinated to prevent serious complications and even death after infection. The Government appeals to persons who are not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, to get vaccinated as soon as possible for better self-protection.

Subsequent to the announcement by the CHP on the updated quarantine arrangements of local COVID-19 cases with a mutant strain, persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the Department of Health (DH). They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf). In addition, all household members of close contacts are required to undergo compulsory testing. Any person who had lived with a person placed under quarantine pursuant to section 22 of the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) (person under quarantine) in the same residential unit on the date of commencement of quarantine or during the 14 days before that day, and who becomes aware of the quarantine of the person under quarantine when the relevant quarantine has not yet been completed, has to undergo testing within two days of him or her becoming aware that the person under quarantine has been placed under quarantine and report to the Government the result of the test by phone (6275 6901), fax (2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test. For prudence's sake, the above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well.

CTCs provide testing services for the public, including free service for persons subject to compulsory testing. Booking and walk-in services are available. Members of the public only need to provide simple personal information on the 24-hour booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en). The system shows the booking status of the centres for the coming two weeks to facilitate the public's planning and selection of a suitable testing centre and a time slot for testing. The testing centres will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. As of 6pm on January 18, there were around 23 000 booking places available for today (January 19) at the CTCs, and around 75 per cent and 86 per cent availability for booking places for the coming seven days and 14 days respectively. Members of the public may call the testing centres for enquiries on the availability of bookings or walk-in quotas before visiting the centres.

Seven mobile specimen collection stations will be in service in Sham Shui Po district today to provide free testing for all local residents and

workers (including those subject to compulsory testing) (details at link: www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202201/18/P2022011800720.htm). The Government will set up or re-open mobile specimen collection stations at the following locations to provide free services for persons subject to compulsory testing today. Details of the service scope are in the Annex:

- Open space next to Block G of Ming Wah Dai Ha in Shau Kei Wan
- Open area outside Wan Poon House of Chai Wan Estate
- Lay-by on Nam Ning Street (outside entrance of Carpark of Site 4 & 5, Aberdeen Centre)
- Podium of Maya at 8 Shung Shan Street in Yau Tong
- G/F of Kam Huen House (Block F), Kam Fung Court in Ma On Shan
- Open area near clubhouse outside Tower 2 podium of Granville Garden in Tai Wai
- Open area outside Yat Wan House of Tin Yat Estate in Tin Shui Wai
- Open area outside Block 2 of Grandeur Terrace in Tin Shui Wai

The service period of the mobile specimen collection stations at Causeway Bay Community Centre (near Fortress Hill MTR station), North Point Community Hall and Carpark of Quarry Bay Community Hall will be extended to February 3. The mobile specimen collection station at open area outside Tung Moon House, Tai Hang Tung Estate will be relocated to Tai Hang Tung Community Centre, and that at Tsing Tin Playground in Tuen Mun has ceased operation on January 18.

Free testing service will be provided to persons subject to compulsory testing at CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations located at 69 places in various districts today. The testing capacity should be sufficient to meet the demand. Persons subject to compulsory testing and those who received the "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the CHP reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may conduct free testing at CTCs or mobile specimen collection stations (if the service scope is applicable). The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations are stated in the Annex.

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable) at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;
2. To attend any of the CTCs (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en);
3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf), and the relevant sample must be taken through combined nasal and throat swabs; or
4. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the stool sample

collected as per relevant guidelines.

If a person subject to compulsory testing obtains a medical certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner, proving that he or she is unfit to undergo testing using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs because of health reasons, then he or she may choose to undergo testing via the following routes by providing a deep throat saliva sample:

1. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the 120 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);
2. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority; or
3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau cautioned that testing received at the Accident and Emergency Departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notice.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the CTCs."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notifications containing the result of the test and the relevant medical certificate (if applicable) for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the CTCs, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the CTCs are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing

notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or had contact with cases tested positive), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."