

Government gazettes compulsory testing notice and specifications under Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation

The Government exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and gazetted a compulsory testing notice and specifications, which require any person who had been present at nine specified premises and persons who had been engaged to work at fitness centres during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test, and continue to empower a registered medical practitioner to require any person whom he clinically suspects has contracted COVID-19 to undergo a test during a period of 14 days from March 20 to April 2, 2021.

Compulsory testing notice

Currently, in all districts in Hong Kong, if one or more new confirmed cases are found in the residential buildings (including buildings for both commercial and residential uses), or there are sewage samples tested positive which implied possible infection risks, the buildings will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

For testing targeting at workplaces, if one or more confirmed cases are found in a workplace, it will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

Seven premises fulfilling the above criteria were included in the compulsory testing notice today (March 19). Among them, since a few cases were found at different floors of One Island East, 18 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, the whole building was covered in the compulsory testing notice. In addition, since there were outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) in Sham Shui Po Baptist Church Kindergarten, 1/F, 4 Kwong Lee Road, Sham Shui Po and St. Catherine's International Kindergarten, 4-6 Norfolk Road, Kowloon Tong, and the symptoms of URTI are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, the schools were also covered in the compulsory testing notice.

To target the cluster outbreak in relation to fitness centres, further to the compulsory testing requirements on March 12, all persons who had been engaged to work or had been on duty at any fitness centre in Hong Kong at any time during the specified period have to undergo second compulsory testing, in order to break the transmission chain in the community early.

The Government encourages persons subject to compulsory testing to

utilise the testing services of the community testing centres across the territory. Furthermore, more mobile specimen collection stations will be set up in various districts. Persons subject to compulsory testing including staff of fitness centres can receive free testing in community testing centres or mobile specimen collection stations.

Details of the compulsory testing notices are as follows:

1. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part A of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by March 22, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 17 and March 19, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.
2. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part B of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff and visitors), have to undergo testing by March 22, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 17 and March 19, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.
3. Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Part C of Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from March 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff, students and visitors), have to undergo testing by March 22, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing choose to undergo testing using the specimen bottles distributed by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), they have to return the specimen bottle with the sample by March 24, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between March 17 and March 19, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notice.
4. Any person who had been engaged to work or had been on duty at any fitness centre in Hong Kong defined under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) at any time during the period from March 6 to March 19, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff), have to undergo testing by March 21, 2021.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau reminds the public that in accordance with the compulsory testing notice issued earlier, all household members of close contacts are required to undergo compulsory testing. Any person who had lived with a person who is 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, have to undergo testing

within two days of he/she becoming aware of the person under quarantine has been placed under quarantine and report to the Government the result of the test by phone (at 6275 6901), fax (at 2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test.

The Government will set up mobile specimen collection stations at the following locations tomorrow (March 20). Please see Annex 2 for details of service scope.

- South Horizons, Ap Lei Chau
- Berkshire House and Oxford House, Quarry Bay
- Ping Tin Estate, Lam Tin
- Tin Fu Court, Tin Shui Wai

Starting from tomorrow (March 20), the mobile specimen collection station at Beech Street, Tai Kok Tsui will be relocated to 557 Shanghai Street, Mong Kok (opposite to Langham Place) and will be open until March 21 (Sunday) tentatively. The service period of the mobile specimen collection stations at Wong Chuk Hang Recreation Ground, Wong Tai Sin Square, Sha Tsui Road Playground in Tsuen Wan, Plaza of Sha Tin Town Hall, Tai Po Community Centre, On Hing Playground in Yuen Long, Tin Shui Sports Centre in Tin Shui Wai and Kin Sang Community Hall in Tuen Mun will be extended to March 28 (Sunday).

The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are stated in Annex 2. Apart from mobile specimen collection stations, persons subject to compulsory testing can also choose to attend any of the community testing centres in all districts to receive testing free of charge.

Persons who had been engaged to work or had been on duty at any fitness centre can receive free testing at any mobile specimen collection stations which serve "local residents and workers subject to compulsory testing", "staff of catering premises and designated scheduled premises under Cap. 599F" or "general public".

The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are stated in Annex 2. Apart from mobile specimen collection stations, persons subject to compulsory testing can also choose to attend any of the community testing centres in all districts to receive testing free of charge.

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 community testing centres (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/);

3. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the 121 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general outpatient 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);
4. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority;
5. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the Department of Health (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); or
6. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

The spokesman cautioned that testing received at 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 community testing centres."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notification containing result of the test 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 community testing centres, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the community testing centres are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info/.

Relevant specifications for compulsory testing for persons clinically suspected to have contracted COVID-19

According to expert advice, compulsory testing for symptomatic patients can effectively slow down the transmission of the virus by early identification, early isolation and early treatment. To keep the epidemic situation under control, the Government considers it necessary to continue to solicit help from medical practitioners in identifying possibly infected

persons as soon as possible.

During the period of 14 days from March 20 to April 2, 2021, registered medical practitioners may, by a written direction, require a person whom the medical practitioner attends to in the course of professional practice and clinically suspects to have contracted COVID-19 to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test. Persons who receive the written direction (persons who are subject to testing under written directions) should undergo a test within two days after the issue date of the written direction (the testing deadline).

Persons who are subject to testing under written directions may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

(1) To use the specimen bottle provided by the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction to collect a deep throat saliva specimen and submit the specimen bottle to designated specimen collection points by the testing deadline (see the specimen collection points and time at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html). Having reported the case to the DH, the registered medical practitioner who issued the written direction will be notified of the test result; or

(2) To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories recognised by the DH (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf) by the testing deadline and submit the test result to the medical practitioner who issued the written direction or his clinic staff by electronic mail, fax, or by hardcopy within four days after the testing deadline.

For example, if the written direction is issued on Monday, the person subject to testing under the written direction should undergo a test via one of the above options on or before Wednesday, the testing deadline. If the test result of the specimen is preliminary positive, the specimen will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the DH for a confirmatory test. Confirmed cases will be followed up and announced by the Centre for Health Protection of the DH.

"Persons who are subject to testing under written directions are suspected to be infected and should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the community testing centres for testing. To reduce transmission risk, relevant persons who underwent testing are advised to stay at home and avoid going out when waiting for test results."

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.

Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals

to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purpose as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

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 contacted confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."