

Government plans to adjust quarantine requirements for vaccinated persons arriving at Hong Kong

The Government announced today (June 21) that the quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have received COVID-19 vaccination will be adjusted in phases. Except for those who had stayed in extremely high-risk or very high-risk places (Group A1 and A2 specified places), fully vaccinated persons with a positive result of serology testing for antibodies will be subject to a further shortened compulsory quarantine period of seven days upon arrival. Additionally, the restriction from entry to Hong Kong will also be relaxed for fully vaccinated non-Hong Kong residents who have not stayed in Group A1 or Group A2 specified places. The relevant persons are still subject to multiple nucleic acid tests after arrival to avoid missing any cases.

The relevant arrangements implement the interim recommendations of the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (Joint Scientific Committee, JSC) joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP) made on June 9 (see [separate press release](#)).

A Government spokesman said, "The local epidemic situation has become stable, and the vaccination rate is increasing steadily. Hong Kong is well equipped to allow persons arriving at Hong Kong who are fully vaccinated and possess positive serology antibody test results to be subject to a further shortened compulsory quarantine period of seven days and to allow non-Hong Kong residents to enter Hong Kong after fulfilling certain conditions, depending on the risk level of the places they have stayed. This will enable gradual and orderly resumption of flows of people with other places.

"Hong Kong has been maintaining strict border control measures against importation of cases to control the epidemic situation. Meanwhile, as Hong Kong is an international metropolis, many of our citizens have genuine needs to travel around the world. There are also social and economic needs to maintain flows of people between Hong Kong and other places. The above arrangements adopted the recommendations of the experts and were supported with strong scientific grounds. It strikes a balance between the need for preventing the importation of cases and that for facilitating travelling. It is also in line with the international trend to take vaccination as a means of resuming normality of society."

Details of the relevant arrangements are as follows:

Compulsory quarantine period for vaccinated persons arriving at Hong Kong to be shortened

Persons arriving at Hong Kong who have only stayed in Group B specified places, Group C specified places or Taiwan on the day of arrival or the 14 days before that day will be subject to a shortened compulsory quarantine period of seven days at designated quarantine hotels if they fulfil the following three conditions. They have to undergo two nucleic acid tests during the quarantine period, followed by a seven-day self-monitoring period as well as compulsory testing on the 12th, 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong. The three conditions are:

1. Fully vaccinated with a vaccination record (Note 1);
2. Obtained a negative nucleic acid test result during "test-and-hold" upon arrival at Hong Kong; and
3. Possess positive result proof of a recognised serology antibody test conducted within the past three months (Note 2).

Fully vaccinated persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in Group B specified places, Group C specified places or Taiwan on the day of arrival or the 14 days before that day have to follow the prevailing compulsory quarantine requirements applicable to them if they choose not to receive a serology antibody test, or their serology antibody test result is negative. This means that they will be subject to 14-day compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels, with three nucleic acid tests to be conducted during the period, followed by a seven-day self-monitoring period as well as compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong. Relevant persons arriving at Hong Kong who are yet to be vaccinated will be subject to 21-day compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels, with four nucleic acid tests to be conducted during the period.

Since Group A1 and Group A2 specified places are extremely high-risk and very high-risk groups, the above arrangements of allowing a shorter compulsory quarantine period for fully vaccinated persons with positive serology antibody results do not apply to those who have stayed in these places. According to the prevailing requirement, such persons are subject to 21-day compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels, with four nucleic acid tests to be conducted during the period, followed by compulsory testing on the 26th day of arrival at Hong Kong.

According to the prevailing requirement, fully vaccinated persons arriving at Hong Kong who have only stayed in Group D specified places, the Mainland or Macao on the day of arrival or the 14 days before that day are subject to seven-day compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels (for persons who have stayed in Group D specified places) or home (for persons who have stayed in the Mainland or Macao), with two nucleic acid tests to be conducted during the period, followed by a seven-day self-monitoring period as well as compulsory testing on the 12th day of arrival at Hong Kong. In other words, the relevant travellers have already been subject

to a shortened seven-day quarantine period without the need to undergo a serology antibody test. As regards persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in relevant places and are yet to be fully vaccinated, they will continue to be subject to the prevailing requirement, i.e. 14-day compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels (for persons who have stayed in Group D specified places) or home (for persons who have stayed in the Mainland or Macao), with three nucleic acid tests to be conducted during the period, followed by a seven-day self-monitoring period as well as compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong.

Details on the prevailing grouping of specified places and their respective boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements can be found at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/high-risk-places.html.

Entry of non-Hong Kong residents to Hong Kong

At present, non-Hong Kong residents can only enter Hong Kong if they have only stayed in Group D specified places, the Mainland or Macao on the day of arrival or the 14 days before that day. The Government plans to allow non-Hong Kong residents who have been fully vaccinated with a vaccination record and who have only stayed in Group B specified places, Group C specified places or Taiwan to enter Hong Kong. Such non-Hong Kong residents have to comply with the same quarantine and nucleic acid testing requirements as those applicable to Hong Kong residents, including a seven-day shortened compulsory quarantine period for those who possess positive result proof of a recognised serology antibody test conducted within the past three months.

Implementation arrangement and timetable

The Government is working out the details of implementing the above arrangements and will make announcements at an appropriate juncture. Such implementation details include a list of recognised laboratories providing serology testing service, and provision of serology antibody testing service for inbound travellers at the airport. The plan is to implement the above measures in two phases.

The first phase will be launched on June 30. Before the serology antibody testing service is available at the airport, travellers can receive the designated serology antibody test at one of the recognised local medical laboratories at their own cost before departure. The positive result proof is valid for three months. Starting from June 30, travellers who have the valid positive result proof will be subject to a shortened quarantine period of seven days according to the above arrangements.

Depending on the implementation progress of the relevant facilities, the Government will implement the second-phase arrangements within July to provide self-paid serology antibody testing service for inbound travellers at the airport. According to the above arrangements, the compulsory quarantine period for those with a serology antibody positive result will be shortened

to seven days, and the entry to Hong Kong by relevant non-Hong Kong residents will be relaxed. The operational details of the measures concerned will be announced in due course.

The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau will also suitably introduce serology testing as one of the requirements for exemption from compulsory quarantine for qualified persons of the financial sector and listed companies.

The spokesman said, "According to the interim recommendations of the JSC-EAP, the purpose of checking antibodies is to show evidence of response to vaccination. A negative result or low antibody level may not correlate with lack of protection.

"The Government will continue to closely monitor the epidemic situation of various places, the prevalence of new virus variants, vaccination progress, and changes in the volume of cross-boundary passenger traffic, and will adjust the boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from relevant places as the situation warrants."

Note 1: Fully vaccinated means the suggested dosage has been administered in accordance with the relevant guidelines of a COVID-19 vaccination course at least 14 days prior to arrival at Hong Kong. The relevant vaccines administered should be those included on the List of COVID-19 Vaccines Recognised for Specified Purposes (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/list_of_recognised_covid19_vaccines.pdf). For travellers who have recovered from previous COVID-19 infection, they will be required to receive one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in order to be considered as fully vaccinated.

Note 2: Recognised serology antibody positive result proof refers to proof of a positive result in a designated format after receiving a designated serology antibody test by a recognised local medical laboratory. The Government will compile a list of recognised medical laboratories offering serology testing service in Hong Kong, for reference by people who have to travel and would like to receive serology testing in Hong Kong before departure. To assist inbound travellers who are unable to receive serology antibody testing in Hong Kong before departure, especially those Hong Kong residents and non-Hong Kong residents currently situated overseas, the Government is also exploring the provision of serology antibody testing service at the airport. At present, taking into account experts' advice, relevant serology antibody testing has to be done by blood drawn from veins. For medical laboratories which currently do not have virology-serology accreditation, the test should be done through a specified testing platform to ensure reliability. The decision to receive serology testing is completely voluntary and it is a self-paid option. The serology antibody test result will be valid for three months.