

Government rolls out new measures to enhance community testing services starting today

The Government announced today (October 6) that a series of enhancement measures have been rolled out progressively starting today in a bid to provide ample, high-quality, speedy, accessible and affordable community testing services and further assist members of the public to undergo nucleic acid tests.

The five areas of enhancement measures are detailed as follows:

(1) Regularise a number of mobile specimen collection stations to become community testing centres (CTCs) and community testing stations (CTSs). Coupled with the 19 existing CTCs and a new CTS to be set up at North Point Vehicular Ferry Pier Playground from tomorrow (October 7), upon regularisation, a total of 85 CTC/CTSs will constitute a community testing network covering all 18 districts in Hong Kong, with most of them located in the vicinity of MTR stations. It is roughly estimated that around 70 per cent of the population can reach CTC/CTSs within 15 minutes of walking (approximately a 1 kilometre distance) from their residence.

(2) Extend and standardise the service hours of CTC and CTSs.

Indoor/covered CTCs (32 in total)

Service hours: daily from 8am to 8pm
(closed from 1.30pm to 2pm for deep cleaning and disinfection)

CTC at Discovery Bay Community Hall

Service hours: daily from 10am to 8pm
(closed from 1.30pm to 2pm for deep cleaning and disinfection)

Outdoor CTSs (52 in total)

Service hours are generally daily from 10am to 8pm. Some CTSs with higher usage (including Southorn Playground in Wan Chai, Sau Ming Road Park in Kwun Tong, Lam Tin Service Reservoir Playground, Tong Ming Street Park in Tsuen Kwan O and the hard-surfaced soccer pitch of Ma On Shan Recreation Ground) are/will be opened daily from 8am to 8pm.

(3) Starting late October, all 85 CTC/CTSs will provide self-paid testing services at two pricing tiers. Members of the public can enjoy quicker nucleic acid test services at more affordable prices for the general community or private purposes such as certifications for travelling or work. The exact implementation date will be announced later.

- "Standard self-paid service": if the test result is negative, members of the public will receive a test result report issued by the testing agency within 24 hours of specimen collection. The price of the testing service concerned is capped at \$150 (note).
- "Express self-paid service": if the test result is negative, members of the public will receive a test result report issued by the testing agency within 12 hours of specimen collection. The price of the testing service concerned is capped at \$240 (note).

To reduce the risk of virus transmission, testing agencies will provide various means of contactless payments. Outdoor CTCs will only accept contactless payments but not cash owing to security considerations.

(4) Expand the existing arrangements of online booking for testing services. Starting early November, online bookings will be progressively expanded from the 40-plus testing points currently covered to all 85 CTC/CTSs. Members of the public can make bookings through the [online booking system](#), and the testing centres/stations will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings.

(5) Set up a "green lane" at CTC/CTSs for certain high-risk persons (e.g. staff members of residential care homes (RCHs) and nursing homes) to save their time spent waiting on site. Moreover, starting in November, persons undergoing voluntary testing will be required to use the Testing Registration Code in order to enjoy free tests. They should fill in registration information in advance in the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application to generate a user-designated QR code for scanning on site every time they undergo testing in lieu of inputting manual data to simplify the registration process for nucleic acid testing.

In addition, more testing agencies have been engaged through a competitive procurement process to undertake community testing services. A total of 14 contractors will operate CTC/CTSs, up from nine currently. A Government spokesman stressed that all contractors are laboratories on the "Local COVID-19 nucleic acid testing institutions recognised by the Hong Kong SAR Government" list maintained by the Department of Health (DH). The contractors have all passed the External Quality Assessment Programme for COVID-19 testing of the DH and possess relevant laboratory accreditation. The Government took into due consideration various factors such as the testing capacity, past experience and performance of the testing agencies in the course of the competitive procurement process.

The Government spokesman said, "With the participation of more contractors, it is conducive to the further strengthening of the local community's testing capability and ramping up of testing capacity. It can also substantially enhance the speed and convenience of nucleic acid testing, thereby enabling the Government to roll out various enhancement measures for the provision of ample, high-quality, speedy, accessible and affordable community testing services."

Nucleic acid testing is the gold standard for COVID-19 tests and its higher sensitivity is particularly effective in screening out those with a low viral load and identifying cases early for cutting transmission chains in the community. By conducting regular nucleic acid testing for targeted groups such as Hospital Authority staff, staff of RCHs for the elderly and persons with disabilities and school staff, risk of large-scale transmission in RCHs and schools can also be reduced to offer better protection for vulnerable groups including the elderly and children. The spokesman reiterated that the Government will not adopt a "lie flat" approach in anti-epidemic work and will continue to do its utmost to contain the epidemic under a targeted approach with a view to yielding the greatest effects with the lowest costs.

The spokesman also reminded the public that about half of CTC/CTSs will have new service providers and hence services will be suspended temporarily on some of the dates. Details on the location, service dates/hours and contractors of CTC/CTSs are in the Annex. Members of the public may refer to the following thematic webpage for relevant information: www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html if they wish to undergo COVID-19 testing through testing means other than CTC/CTSs.

CTC/CTSs provide specimen collection services by using combined nasal and throat swabs and COVID-19 testing services for all asymptomatic individuals holding valid Hong Kong identity cards, Hong Kong birth certificates or other valid identity documents (including Hong Kong residents and non-Hong Kong residents). Users of the free testing service will also be informed of test results by SMS notifications through their mobile phones. Those who have tested positive will be followed up by the DH in accordance with established procedures. Persons who have symptoms should seek medical attention immediately and should not visit the CTC/CTSs.

Note: As positive specimens are subject to checking and verification, it may take a longer time for the testing agency to issue the test report. Furthermore, contractors can set the service price at a level lower than the capped amount, hence the prices of self-paid services at different CTC/CTSs may vary.