

Government tightens border control measures for persons arriving at Hong Kong

The Government announced today (August 17) that the boarding, quarantine and testing requirements for persons arriving from overseas will be tightened from 0.00am on August 20, in view of the developments of the global COVID-19 epidemic situation and the latest expert recommendations. For travellers arriving at Hong Kong who had stayed in medium-risk places, their compulsory quarantine periods in designated quarantine hotels (DQHs) could at most be shortened to 14 days if they hold recognised vaccination record.

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (JSC-EAP), convened a meeting on August 16. Based on the latest known scientific understanding on COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines, JSC-EAP updated the consensus interim recommendation on the quarantine requirements for vaccinated inbound travellers (see [separate press release](#)).

JSC-EAP pointed out that the Delta variant, with higher transmissibility, is rapidly spreading around the world, and that fully vaccinated persons with the Delta variant breakthrough infections can spread the virus to others. JSC-EAP noted that the risks to the local community associated with overseas imported cases increasingly threaten the Government's prevention and control efforts regarding the local epidemic situation. After reviewing the data on imported cases involving fully vaccinated persons, JSC-EAP has thus updated their earlier consensus interim recommendation – the compulsory quarantine period can only be shortened to 14 days at most, even if the persons arriving at Hong Kong were fully vaccinated and possess positive serology antibody test results.

After making reference to the updated expert recommendations, the Government will adjust the relevant boarding and quarantine arrangements from 0.00am on August 20. The Government will also enhance testing arrangements. The number of post-arrival tests for relevant groups will be increased to at least six times during the quarantine and self-monitoring periods, and the final compulsory test after the completion of quarantine must be conducted in Community Testing Centres (CTCs). The updated boarding, quarantine and testing arrangements applicable to the each of the overseas groups will be as follows (details in Annex):

Arrangements for high-risk Group A specified places

Persons who have stayed in Group A specified places on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day can

only board flights for Hong Kong if they are Hong Kong residents (HKRs) who are fully vaccinated (Note 1) and hold a recognised vaccination record (Note 2). The boarding and quarantine requirements applicable to Group A specified places remain unchanged but the number of tests will be increased. Details will be as follows:

- (a) Undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in a DQH;
- (b) Undergo six tests during compulsory quarantine;
- (c) Self-monitor for the subsequent seven days; and
- (d) Undergo compulsory testing in a CTC on the 26th day of arrival at Hong Kong.

Arrangements for medium-risk Group B specified places

For HKRs who have stayed in Group B specified places on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 14 days before that day (the relevant period), but have not stayed in Group A specified places, the relevant quarantine requirements will be as follows:

- (a) Undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in a DQH; and
- (b) Undergo six tests during compulsory quarantine.

Relevant non-HKRs who do not hold a recognised vaccination record are not allowed to board flights for Hong Kong.

As regards relevant HKRs and non-HKRs who are fully vaccinated and hold a recognised vaccination record, their quarantine period can be shortened upon arrival. The relevant quarantine and testing requirements will be as follows:

- (a) Undergo compulsory quarantine for 14 days in a DQH;
- (b) Undergo four tests during compulsory quarantine;
- (c) Self-monitor for the subsequent seven days; and
- (d) Undergo compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong, where the test to be taken on the 19th day must be conducted in a CTC.

Arrangements for low-risk Group C specified places

For HKRs and non-HKRs who have stayed in Group C specified places during the relevant period, but have not stayed in Group A or Group B specified places, the relevant quarantine requirements remain unchanged yet the compulsory testing requirements will be enhanced. Details will be as follows:

- (a) Undergo compulsory quarantine for 14 days in a DQH;
- (b) Undergo four tests during compulsory quarantine;
- (c) Self-monitor for the subsequent seven days; and
- (d) Undergo compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong, where the test to be taken on the 19th day must be conducted in a CTC.

As regards relevant HKRs and non-HKRs who are fully vaccinated and hold

a recognised vaccination record, their quarantine period can be shortened upon arrival. Besides the requirement of recognised vaccination records and the enhanced testing requirements, the relevant quarantine requirements remain unchanged. Details will be as follows:

- (a) Undergo compulsory quarantine for seven days in a DQH;
- (b) Undergo two tests during compulsory quarantine;
- (c) Self-monitor for the subsequent seven days; and
- (d) Undergo compulsory testing on the 9th, 12th, 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong, where the test to be taken on the 19th day must be conducted in a CTC.

A Government spokesman said, "The purpose of checking antibodies is to show evidence of response to vaccination. Under the updated recommendations, experts considered that the compulsory quarantine period can only be shortened to 14 days at most. As such, the Government will tighten the vaccination record requirements, where fully vaccinated persons can only have their quarantine period shortened upon presentation of recognised vaccination records, and the quarantine period can no longer be further reduced with positive serology antibody test result."

"Although the latest evidence shows that vaccination cannot entirely prevent Delta variant infection and halt community transmission, vaccination can still effectively prevent infected persons from getting seriously ill or even death. Therefore, persons who are not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who are most likely to be affected by COVID-19, should get vaccinated as soon as possible for better self-protection before the fifth wave strikes in Hong Kong," the spokesman reiterated.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the epidemic situation of different places, and will consider a basket of factors under the risk-based principle, including public health considerations (such as epidemic situation in particular places, testing rate, vaccination rate, volume of travellers and actual imported cases, etc.), as well as other local socio-economic factors to adjust the boarding, quarantine and testing requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from relevant places based on risk levels 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 vaccination records include those issued by Hong Kong, an authority or recognised institution of a country where its national

regulatory authority is designated by the World Health Organization as a stringent regulatory authority, Mainland or Macao authorities or an institution recognised by Mainland or Macao authorities, or an authority or recognised institution of a country with bilateral vaccination record recognition agreement with Hong Kong.