

Government to gazette compulsory testing notice

The Government will exercise the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publish in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, which requires any person who had been present at 43 specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau reminded the public that persons who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notices and hence are not required to undergo compulsory testing. Completion of the vaccination course in general means having received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine 14 days ago.

Since there were outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection and/or influenza-like illness in 43 schools, and the symptoms of the concerned diseases are similar to those of COVID-19, for prudence's sake, the 43 schools are covered in the compulsory testing notice today (May 10). Under existing practice, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) will provide these kindergartens and schools with stool specimen bottles or deep throat saliva specimen collection packs direct.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are at Annex 1.

In addition, subsequent to the announcement by the CHP on the updated quarantine arrangements of local COVID-19 cases with the N501Y mutant strain, persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases and had been released from the quarantine centres will be subject to compulsory testing on the 3rd, 7th, 12th and 19th day counting from the day on which the confirmed case left the relevant building. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day. Details of the buildings and dates of testing are listed at Annex 2. Relevant persons have to undergo testing on specified dates.

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 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 (at 6275 6901), fax (at 2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk)

within three days of undergoing the test.

The spokesman thanked the general public for their co-operation in undergoing compulsory testing for fighting the virus together.

During the period from May 1 to May 9, over 340 000 FDHs have been tested at 21 community testing centres (CTCs) and mobile specimen collection stations or submitted deep throat saliva specimen.

Currently, there are a total of 21 CTCs providing testing service 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). Booking status of centres for the coming week will be shown for public's selection of suitable testing centre and time slot for testing. The testing centres will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. The number of tests available for appointments at CTCs has been increased to over 46 000 per day, and additional manpower has been deployed to serve the public. As of 6pm today, there are around 18 000 booking places available for tomorrow (May 11) at the 21 CTCs, and around 71% and 84% booking places for the coming 7 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.

The Government will set up a mobile specimen collection station at Block R of Allway Gardens in Tsuen Wan tomorrow for persons subject to compulsory testing. The service period of the mobile specimen collection stations at King George V Memorial Park, Kowloon, MacPherson Playground in Mong Kok and Arthur Street Temporary Playground in Yau Ma Tei will be extended to May 17 (Monday).

Coupled with the 21 CTCs, there will be a total of 38 CTCs/mobile specimen collection stations in various districts tomorrow to provide free service for persons subject to compulsory testing, and the testing capacity should be sufficient to meet the demand. 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 3. Persons subject to compulsory testing, and those with "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the Centre for Health Protection reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may receive free testing at community testing centres or mobile specimen collection stations (if the service scope is applicable).

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 the 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.

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.

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 the DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purposes 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."