

Government updates testing requirements prior to visits to RCHs

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) said today (September 2) that, due to the continued occurrence of confirmed cases among residents and/or staff members in residential care homes (RCHs), visitors' testing requirements prior to their visits to RCHs will be updated according to the advice of the health authorities in order to safeguard the health of frail elderly people and persons with disabilities in RCHs.

From September 5 onwards, all visitors (except for official visitors), apart from continuing to fulfil the Government's COVID-19 vaccination requirements as set out in the Vaccine Pass, are required to undergo polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 (PCR tests), with the specimen collected from the visitor within 48 hours prior to the visit, and provide negative PCR test results in order to visit RCHs.

Visitors may opt for Community Testing Centres (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en) or mobile specimen collection stations (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/station/), where free testing services will be provided if they indicate to the staff on-site that the purpose of the testing is for fulfilling the requirements for visiting RCHs. Visitors can also undergo self-arranged testing at their own expense at private laboratories that are recognised by the Department of Health (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf) and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results. The relevant sample must be taken through combined nasal and throat swabs and must not be taken by the person to be tested. Taking into account the epidemic developments and the protection of RCH residents as the priority target group, recovered persons who have tested positive in the past three months are also required to undergo the above PCR tests.

The Government understands that the relevant arrangement may bring inconvenience to the residents and their families, and appeals to all parties concerned to co-operate with the Government to achieve the prime objective of protecting the residents.