

HA announces enhanced arrangement for greater convenience in testing

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (November 3) announced that the COVID-19 test services provided by General Out-patient Clinics (GOPCs) and Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments will be further enhanced to identify cases of infection earlier and minimise the risk of community transmission.

"The time slots for distribution of specimen collection packs will be increased at 46 GOPCs, assisting individuals who perceive themselves as having a higher risk of exposure and who experience mild discomfort to undergo a COVID-19 test. Apart from services on Monday to Friday, members of the public can obtain the specimen collection packs from specific GOPCs during the service hours (9am to 1pm) on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, starting from this weekend," the HA spokesperson said.

Regarding the arrangement for specimen submission, the GOPCs will extend the specimen collection hours, beginning this Thursday (November 5), to 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 3pm from Monday to Friday, as well as 9am to 11am on Saturdays. Submission of specimens will also be available between 9am and 11am on Sundays and public holidays at some GOPCs. Details of the collection and submission times and clinics are provided in the attachment.

In addition, three GOPCs (namely Sai Wan Ho General Out-patient Clinic, Ap Lei Chau General Out-patient Clinic and Yuen Long Jockey Club Health Centre) will pilot the use of vending machines to help members of the public to obtain specimen collection packs with greater convenience.

"The vending machines will be placed outside the usual service areas to minimise the impact on the clinics' operation and can be used more easily by the public," the spokesperson said.

The HA will closely monitor the utilisation of the vending machines by the general public. If space and operation allow, more clinics will install vending machines to facilitate easy collection of specimen packs by the general public. The clinics can then focus manpower on providing the normal services.

"In addition, according to the latest scientific evidence and expert opinions, deep throat saliva collected under the principle of no food or drink, no mouth rinsing and no brushing teeth within two hours is equally effective as specimen collection in the early morning for a COVID-19 test," the spokesman said.

"Patients provided with specimen collection packs after A&E attendance can submit their specimens anytime on the same day, if the specimens are collected after two hours without eating, drinking, mouth rinsing and

brushing teeth. The arrangement can help shorten the time lag for confirming patient infection and expedite the removal of invisible transmission links in the community."

The HA has updated the "Patient Information Sheet on Deep Throat Saliva Collection". Staff of hospitals and clinics will provide the patients with the updated information on collection points and times.