

Labour Department reminds foreign domestic helpers to undergo compulsory testing and encourages them to get vaccinated

The Labour Department (LD) today (May 14) reminded foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) to undergo COVID-19 testing again from tomorrow (May 15) to May 30, and encouraged FDHs to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect their own health and the health of their employers' families and others.

An LD spokesman said, "After risk assessment and taking into account that an FDH's job entails taking care of the elderly and children, the Food and Health Bureau considered it more prudent to require FDHs to undergo compulsory testing for a second time in view of the earlier N501Y mutant strain cluster. As in the previous round of compulsory testing, FDHs who have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine for 14 days are exempted from undergoing the test."

The spokesman continued, "With the experience gained from the earlier compulsory testing, the compulsory testing period this time covers a total of 16 days, including three weekends, to assist FDHs to arrange time for undergoing the test. The Government will work with the operators to enhance the testing capacity of community testing centres (CTCs) and mobile specimen collection stations, particularly over the weekends. The LD has, through major employer groups, called on employers to arrange for FDHs to undergo testing at CTCs on weekdays as far as possible and make bookings in advance, to prevent FDHs from gathering and queuing for testing on Saturdays and Sundays."

The Food and Health Bureau issued a compulsory testing notice on May 12 and announced the details of CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations. Any relevant person who fails to comply with compulsory 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.

The Government reminds FDHs to keep the SMS notification containing the test result for checking by law enforcement officers when the FDHs are required to provide information about them having taken the specified test. As for exempted FDHs, they can download their electronic vaccination records or save the printouts of their vaccination records on their mobile phones, or bring along the printouts or copies of their vaccination records, so as to prove their eligibility for exemption to law enforcement officers.

The Government has all along been implementing anti-epidemic measures based on risk assessment. Compulsory testing arrangements equally apply to persons in other high-risk sectors or those who are in contact with a considerable number of high-risk persons during their work. For example, staff of residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities and nursing homes have undergone 14 rounds of compulsory testing since December last year and are undergoing the 15th round of compulsory testing.

In view of the threat posed by mutant strains, it is imperative for the public to get vaccinated as soon as possible. While there is still a shortage in the global supply of COVID-19 vaccines, the two vaccines procured by the Government are sufficient for all Hong Kong people (including FDHs) to get vaccinated. At present, there are still plenty of unutilised quotas every day in the 29 community vaccination centres and over 1 000 private clinics. The Government appeals to all FDHs to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect their own health and the health of their employers' families and others.

The Government thanks FDHs and employers for their understanding and co-operation with the anti-epidemic measures.