

Online appointments for Universal Community Testing Programme to begin tomorrow (with photo/video)

To cut the transmission chain of COVID-19 in the community, the Government will launch the Universal Community Testing Programme (UCTP) on September 1 to provide a one-off free testing service for the public. Members of the public can make online appointments at the dedicated website of the UCTP (www.communitytest.gov.hk) starting from tomorrow (August 29).

"Members of the public are required to provide their name, Hong Kong Identity (HKID) card number and contact telephone numbers when making online appointments. They can then choose the community testing centre, testing date and time slot. The community testing centres will open from 8am to 8pm with a one-hour break for cleaning and disinfection, with each time slot lasting for 30 minutes. A confirmation notification will be sent to participants by SMS after making appointments," said a Government spokesman.

"Except for children under six years old and people not suitable for the test, all holders of valid HKID cards or birth certificates who are asymptomatic can participate in the programme," the spokesman added.

"The Government has set up 141 community testing centres in all districts across the territory. To ensure the health and safety of the public participating in the programme and personnel manning the testing centres, all the venues selected by the Government for use as community testing centres have been assessed and considered suitable by the DH and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department. Various infection control measures will also be put in place at the centres in accordance with the recommendations of the DH. There will also be an adequate supply of protective equipment for personnel manning the testing centres, including suitable respirators (or equivalent), eye protection, gowns, gloves, etc."

The spokesman said that the elderly or people who need special assistance can visit any post office during office hours to seek assistance in making appointments online. People may also seek help from the estate management offices of public housing estates they reside.

"Upon arrival at testing centres according to the scheduled appointments, members of the public should show their identity cards or birth certificates for verification. Specimens will then be collected by staff with medical and healthcare training through combined nasal and throat swabs from participants for laboratory testing. People whose test results are negative will be informed by SMS through their mobile phones. If a test result is positive, the DH will take follow-up action immediately. More than 6 000 personnel from the medical and healthcare sectors have enrolled so far to participate in the UCTP. The Government expressed gratitude to the medical and healthcare sectors for their support to the programme.

"The UCTP aims at identifying as early as possible asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in the community and achieving the target of early identification, early isolation and early treatment. The programme is scheduled to run for seven days. Subject to the progress, it may be extended for no more than seven days."

The spokesman stressed that the UCTP will only do testing for COVID-19. All testing will be conducted in Hong Kong. Specimens will not be transported outside Hong Kong and they will be destroyed after testing.

"The Government will handle the personal data of members of the public very carefully. No personal particulars will be indicated on the sampling bottles of the programme. The testing agencies will know only the serial numbers but not the identities of the specimen owners. Moreover, no personal information (including specimens and test results) will be transported outside Hong Kong. The workflow also does not involve the provision of any personal data to any organisations or persons outside Hong Kong. Information of individual cases with positive results will be passed to the DH and the Hospital Authority for follow-up. Personal Information and test results of other cases will be deleted after completion of the programme. Specimens will also be destroyed after completion of the programme."

Laboratory testing and surveillance are important elements in the Government's anti-epidemic work. The spokesman appealed to members of the public to fight the virus together and join the UCTP to protect oneself and others, with a view to winning the battle against the virus as soon as possible.

For details of the UCTP, please visit the website of UCTP at www.communitytest.gov.hk .

