

Testing arrangements enhanced for day patients and healthcare staff

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) Central Command Committee today (January 5) endorsed the recommendations of the Central Committee on Infectious Disease and Emergency Response to enhance the infection control measures for patients attending day care centres and receiving day services.

"Day patients are strongly recommended to have a negative result for a COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to the first scheduled appointment," the HA spokesperson said.

"For patients with regular attendance, they are recommended to repeat the COVID-19 tests on a weekly basis. Patients who will stay in hospitals for less than two hours can be exempted from the test requirement, provided that they wear surgical masks at all times during their stays in the hospitals."

Other enhanced measures to be implemented in all day care centres and day services include avoidance of meal provision. In cases where food provision cannot be avoided, snack will be provided alongside other infection control measures such as separation of patients by partitions or curtains, maintaining social distancing of at least one metre, unidirectional seating, and requiring no talking while eating or drinking.

The enhanced practices will be aligned among public hospital day services such as haemodialysis centres, day chemotherapy centres and geriatric day hospitals, etc.

Meanwhile, the HA is also working on the provision of regular tests for targeted staff providing care for vulnerable patients in the coming two weeks.

The initial target staff groups include those working in day centres providing chemotherapy for cancer patients; outreach teams visiting institutions, e.g. Community Geriatric Assessment Teams and Psycho-geriatric Outreach Teams; Palliative Care Outreach Teams; and staff of oncology wards and haemodialysis centres.

"Important lessons have been learned from the recent hospital outbreaks of COVID-19 cases due to asymptomatic patients with community-acquired infection. With a large number of COVID-19 cases in the community, these enhanced measures will be needed to protect both the patients and our front-line staff," the spokesperson added.