

The Government to further expand the scope for compulsory testing

The Government will exercise the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and will publish in the Gazette compulsory testing notices, which require any person who had been present at specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) said on January 19, "A number of confirmed cases were recently found in certain districts in Hong Kong, including Yau Ma Tei and Jordan, over a short period of time. To cut the transmission chain in the community as soon as possible, the Government is determined to strengthen 'compulsory testing on mandatory basis' ".

Further to the decision made by the Government to lower the threshold for compulsory testing in the specified area bounded by Nathan Road to its east, Jordan Road to its south, Ferry Street to its west and Kansu Street to its north in Yau Ma Tei to Jordan ("the Jordan specified area"), taking into account risk assessments and expert advice, the Government has adjusted the threshold for compulsory testing in the area to further expand the scope for compulsory testing. Details are as below:

1. In the "Jordan specified area", a "core area" bounded by Temple Street to its east, Ning Po Street to its south, Reclamation Street to its west and Pak Hoi Street to its north (see Annex 1) will be delineated. All buildings and structures within the area, around 70 in total, were all covered by the compulsory testing notices regardless of whether confirmed cases were found.
2. For buildings within the "Jordan specified area" but outside the "core area", if there is one or more confirmed cases found in a unit in the past 14 days, or where no confirmed case was found but the sewage samples were constantly tested positive which implied that persons infected with COVID-19 might be present at the relevant places, the buildings would be covered by the compulsory testing notice. Four buildings fulfilling the above criteria were included in the compulsory testing notices.

The Government will also delineate a specified area in Sham Shui Po, bounded by Yen Chow Street to its northwest, Tai Po Road to its northeast, Maple Street to its southeast and Lai Chi Kok Road to its southwest ("Sham Shui Po specified area"). Within the specified area, buildings with one or more confirmed cases found in a unit in the past 14 days would be included in the compulsory testing notice. Six buildings fulfilling the above criteria were included in the compulsory testing notices.

As for all districts in Hong Kong outside the "Jordan specified area" and the "Sham Shui Po specified area", if confirmed cases not epidemiologically linked to each other were found in two or more units in the same building in the past 14 days, the building would be included in the compulsory testing notice. One building fulfilling the above criteria was included in the compulsory testing notices.

"The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance of compulsory testing notices by persons subject to compulsory testing, and continually review the compulsory testing arrangement of the above specified areas taking into account the epidemic development. Since the infection risk in the community of the specified areas might be higher, the Government encourages residents in the areas to undergo testing proactively and promptly, even if they are not subject to compulsory testing. The mobile specimen collection stations will provide free testing services for all residents in the areas regardless of whether they are subject to compulsory testing or not."

Details of the compulsory testing notices are as follows:

(1) Any person who had been present at any of the buildings or structures within the "core area" delineated in Annex 1 for more than two hours at any time during the period from January 6 to January 19, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by January 22, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between January 15 and January 19, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notices.

(2) Any person who had been present at any specified premises listed in Annex 2 for more than two hours at any time during the period from January 6 to January 19, 2021 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by January 22, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between January 17 and January 19, 2021, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notices.

For implementation of the compulsory testing notices for the above specified areas, the Government will extend the service period of the mobile specimen collection station at Kwun Chung Sports Centre and the mobile specimen collection vehicles at the section of Canton Road between Jordan Road and Saigon Street (also called Jade Street) to January 22, 2021 (Friday). The Government will also set up mobile specimen collection stations at Maple Street Playground and Pei Ho Street Sports Centre in Sham Shui Po on January 20. The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are stated in Annex 3. Apart from mobile specimen collection stations, persons subject to compulsory testing can also choose to attend any of the community testing centres in all districts to receive testing free of charge.

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable) at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;
2. To attend any of the community testing centres (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/);
3. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the 121 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general outpatient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);
4. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority;
5. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the Department of Health (DH) and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf); or
6. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the Centre for Health Protection (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

The spokesman cautioned that testing received at accident and emergency departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notices.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the community testing centres."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notification containing result of the test for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons

subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the community testing centres, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the community testing centres are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info/.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the 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.

Members of the Auxiliary Medical Service and the relevant officers of departments such as DH, Home Affairs Department, Social Welfare Department, Housing Department and Hong Kong Police Force, are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purpose as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons. The FHB will publish compulsory testing notices regarding particular groups when necessary taking into account the epidemic developments and the testing participation rate."