



## OVERVIEW

The Government will not let its guard down in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic. Under the principles of science-based and targeted anti-epidemic measures, as well as the proper management of risks and citizen-focused facilitation, it will continue to adjust anti-epidemic measures as appropriate, in light of the epidemic developments and analyses of scientific data. The Government aims to safeguard the wellbeing of citizens and protect the public healthcare system, while reducing the disruption to normal social activities, with a view to achieving the greatest effect with the lowest cost.

The Government's anti-epidemic considerations are:

- Not "lying flat"
  - To contain the number of confirmed cases, and ensure the capacity of the healthcare system
- Reduce critical cases and deaths
- Protect high-risk people, including the elderly and children, and people with chronic illnesses
- Differentiate people into different risk groups precisely and scientifically for proper control
  - To reduce the number of people and areas placed under control and to allow the maximum number of daily activities and participants
- Balance risks against economic impetus
  - To safeguard people's livelihood and Hong Kong's competitiveness on the premise of proper risk management

## ANTI-EPIDEMIC STRATEGY



1. CONTAIN AND CONTROL

2. EARLY TESTING AND DETECTION

3. PREVENTING IMPORTED CASES

4. TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

## 1. CONTAIN AND CONTROL

### EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

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On **January 4, 2020**, the Government activated the “**Serious Response Level**” for the “Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance” (Preparedness and Response Plan).

On **January 6, 2020**, a **Steering Committee** was formed under the Preparedness and Response Plan. In July 2022, the Steering Committee decided to strengthen the anti-epidemic command structure by establishing the Command and Coordination Group (CCG) chaired by the Chief Executive to ensure that different bureaux and government departments can respond swiftly. A CCG Office and task groups or solution teams on specified issues or areas are set up under the CCG.

On **January 8, 2020**, COVID-19 was included in the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance.

On **January 23, 2020**, the **first quarantine centre was activated**, immediately after the first two confirmed cases of infection in Hong Kong were identified.

On **January 25, 2020**, the Government activated the “**Emergency Response Level**” of the Preparedness and Response Plan.

Enacted the Emergency (Exemption from Statutory Requirements) (COVID-19) Regulation to allow the Government to exempt certain persons or projects from all relevant statutory requirements in respect of licensing, registration and application, etc. such that the Government may draw on Mainland's support and resources in a flexible and prompt manner to undertake key anti-epidemic projects at full speed when necessary. The Regulation has come into operation on February 24, 2022.

The Chief Executive expanded the composition of an expert advisory panel by appointing six experts to advise the Government based on science and statistics.

The Government has provided financial assistance to individuals and business affected by the pandemic via the counter-cyclical measures in the previous two Budgets and the Anti-Epidemic Fund (AEF), involving a total of over \$460 billion (about US\$59 billion). The 2022-23 Budget announced counter-cyclical measures to relieve people's hardship, committing a total funding of over \$170 billion (about US\$21.8 billion), and allocate substantial additional resources to step up anti-epidemic efforts.

### PROMOTING “SOCIAL DISTANCING”

Kindergartens/Kindergarten-cum-child care centres, primary, secondary and special schools, as well as private schools offering non-local curriculum have resumed face-to-face classes. Teachers, school staff and students who obtained a negative result of rapid antigen test (RAT) are allowed to return to school.

Half-day face-to-face class arrangements will continue in the 2022/23 school year for the time being. If individual primary and secondary schools meet the Education Bureau's (EDB) vaccination requirements, the EDB will take into account the actual circumstances of schools and allow them to resume whole-day face-to-face classes.

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Social distancing [measures](#), effective until December 28, 2022, as follows:

- **Mandatory mask-wearing** in all public places (except country parks, conducting strenuous physical activity in outdoor public places or exercising in sports premises, and fitness centres which meet air change requirement), when boarding or on board a public transport carrier and in MTR paid areas;
- **Group gatherings** of not more than 12 persons in public places unless exempted;
- Members of the public entering any premises to which the "[Vaccine Pass](#)" applies are required to comply with the vaccination requirements. In premises with higher risk of transmission where members of the public would in general be mask-off for eating/drinking or activities, they are still required to present their "Vaccine Pass" QR code;
- For **catering premises**, the maximum number of persons per table is 12, and banquets with no more than 240 persons are allowed;
- Bars or pubs can have a maximum number of six persons per table;
- Bathhouses, party rooms, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises, cruise ships, swimming pools, sports premises, fitness centres, beauty parlours and massage establishments, places of public entertainment, places of amusement, amusement game centres, event premises, religious premises, barber shops or hair salons, club-houses, hotels, guesthouses, shopping malls, department stores, supermarkets and markets must comply with the relevant infection control requirements and restrictions for operation, including "Vaccine Pass" requirements;
- Patrons who enter bars, pubs, clubs or nightclubs, or enter catering premises for attending banquets, are required to present proof of a negative RAT result obtained within 24 hours or a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based nucleic acid test result within 48 hours;
- Mask-wearing requirement are exempted during photo-taking on stage at events held at catering business premises, premises where events are held and other scheduled premises;
- Live performance and dancing activity are allowed in catering premises, bars or pubs, clubs or nightclubs, cinemas, museums, as well as meeting rooms or function rooms in club-houses and hotels or guesthouses if relevant prerequisites are fulfilled;
- Eating and drinking are allowed in performance venues, cinema houses, outdoor areas of theme parks, spectator stands of outdoor sports premises, as well as outdoor areas of racecourses; and
- Subject to relevant requirements, local group tours with no more than 30 persons may be conducted.

## COVID-19 VACCINATION

The Government provides the public with the Comirnaty vaccine manufactured by BioNTech and the CoronaVac vaccine by Sinovac. Both vaccines are safe and highly effective in protecting against severe disease and death from COVID-19 infection.

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The Government has made a regulation to provide the legal framework for bringing in vaccines that satisfy the criteria of safety, efficacy and quality for emergency use, and set up an indemnity fund to provide support for members of the public who encounter a rare or unpredicted severe adverse event associated with the administration of the vaccine. An expert committee has also been set up to continuously monitor the possible adverse event following administration of the vaccines, and provide professional views and suggestions on safety monitoring of the authorised vaccines.

Hong Kong residents and eligible non-Hong Kong residents can receive vaccinations free of charge. The minimum age for receiving the Sinovac vaccine and BioNTech vaccine is six months.

COVID-19 vaccination is provided to the public in a number of venues, including 12 community vaccination centres (CVCs)/stations, four children CVCs, 13 public hospitals, 55 general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority (HA), 17 Elderly Health Centres, 26 Maternal and Child Health Centres and five Student Health Service Centres under the Department of Health, as well as over 1,000 private doctors and clinics under the vaccination programme. The Government will also arrange outreach teams to vaccinate people in need.

Over 20,140,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered since the implementation of the vaccination scheme on February 26, 2021. The Government will monitor closely the situation of vaccination and continue to further boost the vaccination rates of children and the elderly as a priority.

A “Vaccine Pass” arrangement is implemented, under which only persons who fulfil the vaccination requirements (unless exempted) are allowed to enter or be present at catering premises and specified scheduled premises. Confirmed cases are categorised as persons with a Red Code. They are not allowed to leave the isolation location. After completing isolation, the “Vaccine Pass” will revert to blue, permitting entry to premises that require “Vaccine Pass”.

The Government has launched a [designated website](#) to provide information about the vaccines and vaccination on a one-stop basis. The website is linked to the online vaccination booking system for Hong Kong residents.

## ENHANCED QUARANTINE ARRANGEMENTS AND ISOLATION AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

The Government arranges for patients’ admission to community isolation facilities (CIFs) or hospitals according to their health conditions, living environment, their household family members and other factors, and renders special assistance to those citizens still at home pending admission to isolation facilities or undergoing home isolation. These include anti-epidemic supplies bags, hotline for health enquiries, designated clinics for consultations by booking and transport services by designated fleets.

The HA has enhanced co-ordination among its clusters to provide a total of about 11,500 beds in public hospitals, ensuring that confirmed patients will receive timely treatment. It also operates seven **designated clinics** and tele-consultation service for patients with mild symptoms.

The North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre provides negative pressure wards with about 800 beds. The nearby **Treatment Centre for COVID-19** in AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) is in standby mode.

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The Government is now operating the Penny's Bay CIF, Kai Tak CIF and a CIF hotel to admit patients with no or mild symptoms. The six CIFs located at Tsing Yi, San Tin, Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities Island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), Fanling, Hung Shui Kiu and Yuen Long Tam Mei have been put into standby mode. These facilities can be re-opened within a short time as and when necessary.

The Social Welfare Department operates holding centres at AWE, Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Centre, Siu Sai Wan Sports Centre, Tin Shui Wai Sports Centre, Harbour Road Sports Centre, Choi Wing Road Sports Centre, Tsuen Wan West Sports Centre and Lung Sum Avenue Sports Centre, providing care services to patients from residential care homes for the elderly or residential care homes for persons with disabilities who are asymptomatic or showing mild symptoms. The holding centres will also receive the patients among elderly people or persons with disabilities in the community upon referrals by the HA or the Department of Health. The quarantine centre at AWE receives residential care home residents who are identified as close contacts.

People who are **close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases**, but are asymptomatic, will be **placed under compulsory quarantine** at quarantine centres. ["StayHomeSafe" Scheme](#) was launched to arrange close contacts who are deemed appropriate after assessment to undergo home quarantine.

Government staff will ascertain whether the infected persons under home isolation and close contacts under home quarantine have stayed at their home by making random calls or conducting spot checks.

Over 500 units in two operating quarantine centres.

In view of the latest epidemic development and risk assessment, if the infected persons obtain negative RAT results on both Day 4 and Day 5 after tested positive, they may be discharged from isolation early after reporting the testing result on Day 5. If they obtain one positive RAT result in any of these two days, they are required to undergo RATs and obtain negative results on any two subsequent consecutive days during the isolation period and report the testing results in order to be discharged from isolation. Close contacts are required to conduct daily RATs during the quarantine period. If they obtain negative results in all the daily RATs, they will be discharged from quarantine on Day 5.

## 2. EARLY TESTING AND DETECTION



The Government follows the three key principles of “**compulsory testing on a mandatory basis, targeted testing on an obligatory basis and testing on a voluntary basis**” to conduct large-scale COVID-19 testing for groups of different risks with a view to achieving “early identification, early isolation and early treatment”, and cutting the transmission chains in the community as far as possible.

The Government provides convenient testing services to the public through various channels, including a free testing service, and encouraging them to make good use of various means such as community testing centres (CTCs) and community testing stations (CTSs) located in various districts for testing. The Government has also distributed RAT kits for wider use in the community.

From **March 9, 2020**, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) extended the **Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme**, which provides free virus testing service, to cover all private clinics and hospitals so that cases of COVID-19 can be identified early in order to minimise the risk of community transmission. GOPCs and 17 Accident and Emergency Departments under the HA are covered by the Programme.

Public hospitals will conduct COVID-19 testing for inpatients.

Individuals who perceive themselves to have a higher risk of exposure and who do not experience any symptoms can obtain specimen collection packs free of charge for testing at 41 HA GOPCs, all post offices or vending machines at 20 MTR stations.

Since mid-July 2020, testing for **high-risk groups** has been provided through the **Targeted Group Testing Scheme**. Testing is also arranged on a regular basis or by random sampling for certain targeted groups depending on risk assessment and anti-epidemic needs.

**86 CTCs/CTSs** covering all 18 districts of the city provide self-paid testing service to asymptomatic individuals. The Government will conduct free testing for persons subject to compulsory testing and specified members of the public at the testing centres.

Certain categories of persons will be required to undergo **compulsory COVID-19 testing** under relevant regulation. Specified medical practitioners under the regulation can also require symptomatic patients to undergo testing.

According to the needs of infection control, the Government may make a “**restriction-testing declaration**”, requiring persons within the restricted areas to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the arrangement by the Government, and can only leave after the relevant test results are mostly ascertained.

The Department of Health launched a [declaration system for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using RAT](#) and an [online self-reporting for COVID-19 patient](#) platform to enable speedier assistance to people tested positive.

A [website](#) has been set up to facilitate members of the public to download their own electronic COVID-19 testing records from the test services provided by the Department of Health, the HA and CTCs/CTSs. Members of the public may also store their electronic testing records in the “LeaveHomeSafe” mobile app for easy display of the records when necessary.

### 3. PREVENTING IMPORTED CASES

From February 4, 2020, the Government **closed all but two land boundary control points** (Shenzhen Bay and HZMB) with the Mainland to stem the flow of cross-boundary travel. **All ferry services to and from the Mainland and Macao were suspended.** Entry points at **Shenzhen Bay, HZMB** as well as **Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA)** remain open with customs and health monitoring resources concentrated at these entry points.

Immigration services at Ocean Terminal is suspended.

**Persons who have stayed in overseas places or Taiwan** in the previous seven days can board a flight for Hong Kong if they (i) hold a Green Health Declaration QR code, and (ii) have self-arranged RAT conducted within 24 hours prior to the scheduled time of departure with a negative result and declare via the Health Declaration Form. Non-Hong Kong residents aged 12 or above are required to be fully vaccinated or have obtained a medical exemption certificate before they are allowed to board the flight.

“Test-and-go” arrangement is being implemented at HKIA. Inbound persons are not required to wait for the test result at the airport after undergoing specimen collection for the nucleic acid test. They can take public transport or self-arranged transport to return to their home or their hotel of choice. Receipt of the “test-and-go” nucleic acid test result is required before leaving the place of residence. They have to undergo PCR-based nucleic acid test on Day 2 and undergo daily RATs until Day 5. Negative RAT result should be confirmed before leaving the place of residence each day. Inbound persons should keep photos or SMS notification containing the test results. They can report their daily RAT result and health status via the “[Electronic COVID-19 Medical Surveillance System](#)”.

Persons travelling to Hong Kong from overseas places or Taiwan, who have recovered from COVID-19, are required to receive one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days prior to the day of departure for Hong Kong in order to be considered as fully vaccinated.

**Persons who have only stayed in places in the Mainland or Macao** on the day of boarding for / arrival at Hong Kong or during the seven days before that day, i.e. persons arriving at Hong Kong under the [Return2hk Scheme](#) and [Come2hk Scheme](#), are required to have a Green Health Declaration QR code and subject to self-monitoring for three days. They also need to undergo nucleic acid test on Day 2 of arrival at Hong Kong and keep the SMS notification containing the test result.

For persons who have stayed in any place on the list of at-risk places under the Return2hk / Come2hk Scheme on the day of arrival at Hong Kong or the seven days before that day, they are required to undergo an extra nucleic acid test on Day 1 and keep the SMS notification containing the test result. The days of a person's arrival at Hong Kong is counted with the day of arrival at Hong Kong as Day 0.

To facilitate quarantine-free travel between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in future, the [Hong Kong Health Code](#) system is open for public registration.

#### 4. TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

**Briefings** are held to update the media and the public on latest situation and measures.

Dedicated [website](#) with useful information and updates on latest developments.

**Publicity campaigns** to disseminate personal hygiene messages through online and offline media are run in a number of ethnic minority languages apart from English and Chinese.

[“Tamar Talk” Facebook page](#) provides information and clarifies rumours.

The Radio Television Hong Kong supports the dissemination of up-to-date anti-epidemic-related information to the community through its television and radio channels and websites.

#### USEFUL LINKS

[Website on the Fight Against the Coronavirus](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccination Programme designated website](#)

[CHP's geospatial dashboard on COVID-19](#)

[BrandHK COVID-19 Update Page](#)

[HA Patient Designated Website – Walk with Us – Combat COVID-19](#)

[World Health Organization's Coronavirus website](#)

[University of Hong Kong dashboard on COVID-19 \(with real-time effective reproductive number\)](#)