



OVERVIEW

The anti-epidemic strategy and objective of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government has been premised on the overall interest of the Hong Kong community, including considering the aspirations of members of the public and the impact on the economy. In pursuit of “dynamic zero infection”, Hong Kong has been strictly implementing the strategy of “preventing the importation of cases and the spread of the virus in the community” and striving to contain the virus by a multi-pronged approach so as to achieve “early identification, early isolation and early treatment” of the infected.

To tackle the fifth wave of the epidemic, the SAR Government has been putting in substantial resources to enhance the capacity on various fronts, yet the rapid deterioration of the epidemic has sadly outgrown its existing capacity. The Central Authorities have actively responded to the SAR Government’s requests and provided Hong Kong with ceaseless support in its fight against the epidemic. With strong backing and unwavering support from the Central Government, the SAR Government will steadfastly act in accordance with the important instruction of President Xi Jinping: assume the primary responsibility to stabilise the epidemic situation early and treat this as the overriding mission at present; mobilise all available manpower and resources and adopt all necessary measures to safeguard the lives and health of Hong Kong people and the stability of society.

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

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.

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.

The Chief Executive chairs the **Steering Committee-Command Centre** to oversee concerted efforts to fight the disease. First meeting held on January 26, 2020.

The Chief Executive set up an **expert advisory panel**, comprising three world-renowned experts, to advise the Government in a direct and timely manner.

At an internal high-level meeting on **February 13, 2022**, the Chief Executive appointed the convenors from the Government for five task forces, who will co-ordinate with the representatives of the relevant ministries and commissions of the Central Authorities, as well as the Guangdong Provincial Government, to press ahead with the implementation work to tackle the aggravating situation of the fifth wave of the epidemic in Hong Kong.

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 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 (excluding private schools offering non-local curriculum including international schools) will start special vacation not later than March 17, 2022 until the last day of the Easter holiday originally scheduled by individual schools. Private schools offering non-formal curriculum (commonly known as “tutorial schools”) will continue the suspension of face-to-face classes and on-campus activities until April 18, 2022.

Save for those involved in emergency services and essential public services and in anti-epidemic efforts, all other government employees would continue to **work from home** as far as possible. The Government also appealed to employers to allow their staff members to “work from home” as far as possible according to their operational needs so as to significantly reduce the flow of people and social contact in the community

Implements [“Vaccine Pass”](#) arrangement, requiring all persons (unless exempted) who enter or are present at catering premises and specified scheduled premises to receive at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. The COVID-19 vaccination requirements of the Vaccine Pass will be implemented in three stages, to provide the public with ample time to receive a second or third dose of vaccine.

Until April 20, 2022, social distancing [measures](#) as follows:

- **Mandatory mask-wearing** in all public places (including country parks), when boarding or on board a public transport carrier and in MTR paid areas
- **Group gatherings** of not more than 2 persons in public places unless exempted, and **multi-household gatherings** of not more than 2 households at **private premises**
- Customers or users of all catering business premises and scheduled premises must use the “LeaveHomeSave” mobile application (except persons aged 65 or above and aged 15 or below; persons with disability; and other persons recognised by the Government or organisations authorised by the Government)
- For **catering premises**, dine-in services are not allowed from 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day. No live performance and dancing activity is allowed. Karaoke or mahjong-tin kau activity should also be suspended therein. The maximum number of persons per table is two, and no banquet is allowed.
- Bars or pubs, amusement game centres, bathhouses, fitness centres, places of amusement, places of public entertainment, party rooms, beauty parlours, massage establishments, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises, sports premises, swimming pools, cruise ships, event premises and religious premises (except for funerals) are closed
- Barber shops or hair salons will reopen on March 10 with the full implementation of “Vaccine Pass” requirements and customers must use “LeaveHomeSave” mobile application
- **Club-houses, hotels, guesthouses, shopping malls, department stores, supermarkets and markets** must comply with the relevant infection control requirements and restrictions for operation
- All local tours are suspended.

The Chief Executive Election has been postponed to May 8, 2022

COVID-19 VACCINATION

The Government provides the public with the Comirnaty vaccine manufactured by BioNTech and the Sinovac vaccine. It will continue sourcing safe and effective vaccines from other vaccine manufacturers or drug companies.

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.

All eligible persons who have received two doses of vaccines with the second dose received six months ago can receive a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine free of charge.

Hong Kong residents and eligible non-Hong Kong residents can receive vaccinations. The minimum age for receiving the Sinovac vaccine and BioNTech vaccine is three and five respectively.

COVID-19 vaccination is provided to the public in a number of venues, including 21 community vaccination centres (CVCs), 4 children CVCs, 13 public hospitals, 41 venues operated by private healthcare institutions, 10 GOPCs of the Hospital Authority (HA), 11 Elderly Health Centres, 19 Maternal and Child Health Centres and 5 Student Health Service Centres under the Department of Health, and 4 Mobile Vaccination Stations and over 1,000 private clinics.

Over 13,806,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered since the implementation of the vaccination scheme on February 26, 2021.

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

ENHANCED QUARANTINE ARRANGEMENTS AND ISOLATION AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

In the face of the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic, the top priority of the Government now is not only to suppress the epidemic and reduce infection, but also to strengthen the protection for the elderly and children, and to reduce the numbers of severe cases and deaths caused by the epidemic.

To implement the "reducing death, critical cases and infection" anti-epidemic strategy, the HA has launched measures to enhance the support for COVID-19 patients in the community to prevent disease progression. The HA has implemented a triage system to prioritise hospital services for patients in critical condition.

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 hotline for health enquiries, designated clinics for consultations by booking and transport services by designated taxis.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been converted to a designated hospital for COVID-19 patients, with around 1,500 beds in Main Blocks being utilised to admit severe COVID-19 patients; Tin Shui Wai Hospital and North Lantau Hospital utilise all their entire beds, totalling about 460 beds, to receive COVID-19 patients.

The North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre near AsiaWorld-Expo(AWE) provides negative pressure wards with 816 beds; the community treatment facility at AWE provides 1,000 beds, including 20 negative pressure cubicles; the community isolation facility at Penny's Bay was activated to receive low-risk COVID-19 patients.

The HA has activated 17 **designated clinics** for confirmed cases of COVID-19.

To enhance Hong Kong's treatment capability, the Central Government has assigned a Mainland construction team to build **a hospital for contingency use** in the Lok Ma Chau Loop area.

The Social Welfare Department has set up **holding centres** at Choi Wing Road Sports Centre in Kwun Tong and Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Centre to provide care services for elderly patients referred by the HA.

The Government is pressing ahead at full steam to provide more community isolation facilities. In addition to the existing isolation facilities at Penny's Bay and Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village, extra community isolation and treatment facilities which will come into operation in phases include those from three converted unoccupied buildings in the public housing estates and two sizeable transitional housing projects, rented commercial hotels as well as those constructed at eight sites and in the Lok Ma Chau Loop area. It is expected that a total of over 70,000 units or beds will be provided.

The first two CIFs constructed with the Mainland's support, located in Tsing Yi and San Tin, have commenced operation, respectively providing 3,900 and 2,800 additional beds for emergency isolation.

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 and household contacts of close contacts who are deemed appropriate after assessment to undergo home quarantine for 14 days and four days respectively.

A locally developed **smart bracelet** connected to the user's smartphone will be used to ensure people comply with quarantine requirements.

About 815 units in 5 operating quarantine centres.

Temporary accommodation facility at Tso Kung Tam Outdoor Recreation Centre for Hong Kong residents under compulsory quarantine who are unable to arrange accommodation.

Quarantine facilities have been set up for **residents of residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities** at AWE and the Hong Kong PHAB Association Jockey Club PHAB Camp in Pok Fu Lam.

In view of the latest epidemic development and risk assessment, infected persons who have been sent to CIFs and persons pending admission may conduct rapid antigen tests (RATs) on Day 6 and Day 7 after tested positive if they have received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccines. Similarly, close contacts who have received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccines may conduct RATs on Day 6 and Day 7 of the home quarantine period. If they obtain negative test results during RATs on these two successive days, they may leave CIF or home premises earlier on Day 7; if they obtain at least one positive test result during RATs on these two successive days, they may subsequently conduct RATs on a daily basis. They may immediately leave CIF or home premises for their daily activities after they obtain negative test results for two successive days.

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 CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations located in various districts for testing. The Government has also distributed more 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 33 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.

Nineteen community testing centres across the territory were set up to provide self-paid testing services at a price capped at \$240 to the general community. The Government will conduct testing for the public at the testing centres for public health reasons when necessary.

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 restrict movement of persons subject to compulsory testing, or seal off premises with epidemic outbreaks until all persons on the premises have undergone testing and the test results are ascertained by making a “**restriction-testing declaration**”. The declaration will cover a period of at most 7 days.

The Department of Health launched the "[Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test](#)" for people to register RAT positive results to enable speedier assistance to people tested positive.

The Government is planning a **Compulsory Universal Testing** for cutting virus transmission chains in a thorough, speedy, orderly and effective manner.

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 community testing centres. 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 Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (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.

The Government has adopted a risk-based approach and re-categorised overseas places into **high-risk**, **medium-risk** and **low-risk** groups. Boarding, quarantine and testing requirements are implemented based on risk levels. All inbound travellers are required to comply with [stringent quarantine measures and repeated testing](#).

Only fully vaccinated Hong Kong residents are allowed to board flights for Hong Kong from **high-risk places**. For **medium-risk places**, only Hong Kong residents and fully vaccinated non-Hong Kong residents are allowed to board flights for Hong Kong. For **low-risk places**, both Hong Kong and non-Hong Kong residents are allowed to board flights for Hong Kong. At present, all places outside China are classified as high risk places.

Hong Kong residents who have stayed in **high-risk places** on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 14 days before that day must undergo compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels for 14 days and 6 tests during quarantine, followed by 7 days of self-monitoring. Those who have stayed for more than two hours in the 14-day period in any specified place with flight suspension, i.e. Australia, Canada, France, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the United States of America are not allowed entry.

Anyone who boards a flight for Hong Kong from overseas places must: (1) present prior to boarding a negative result proof of a polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based nucleic acid test for COVID-19 conducted within 48 hours before the scheduled time of departure of the aircraft and confirmation of room reservation at a designated quarantine hotel for the required compulsory quarantine duration; (2) subject to “test and hold” arrangement at the airport upon arrival in Hong Kong; and (3) upon confirmation of negative test result, board the designated transport arranged by the Government to go to a designated quarantine hotel to undergo compulsory quarantine.

In view of the severe epidemic situation in Hong Kong and the disease is still ravaging the world, the current place-specific flight suspension mechanism for nine countries (i.e. Australia, Canada, France, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) has been extended until April 20, 2022.

Persons who have not been fully vaccinated, and who have stayed in places in the Mainland or Macao on the day of arrival at Hong Kong and during the 14 days before that day are required to undergo compulsory quarantine for 14 days at designated places and 3 tests during quarantine, followed by 7 days of self-monitoring. Those who are fully vaccinated are subject to compulsory quarantine at designated places for 7 days, followed by 7 days of self-monitoring, and have to undergo 3 times of compulsory testing.

For Hong Kong residents and fully vaccinated non-Hong Kong residents who have stayed in Taiwan on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong and during the 14 days before that day, they are required to present a negative result proof of [a nucleic acid test within 48 hours](#) prior to boarding a flight for Hong Kong, subject to compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels for 14 days, followed by 7 days of self-monitoring, and have to be tested 8 times.

Hong Kong residents returning from the Mainland or Macao upon fulfilment of specified conditions, including not having been to places outside Hong Kong, the Mainland or Macao, and places in the list of at-risk places of the Return2hk / Come2hk Scheme in the past 14 days, holding a negative nucleic acid test result, etc., could be exempted from compulsory quarantine under the [Return2HK Scheme](#).

Non-Hong Kong residents in Guangdong Province or Macao upon fulfilment of specified conditions, including not having been to places outside Hong Kong, Guangdong Province or Macao, and places in listed of at-risk places of the Return2hk / Come2hk Scheme in the past 14 days, holding a negative nucleic acid results, etc., could be exempted from compulsory quarantine under the [Come2hk Scheme](#).

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

Crew change arrangement for all passenger vessels and goods vessels without cargo operation **suspended** since July 29, 2020.

Quarantine exemption arrangements have been comprehensively tightened, including cancelling most exemption categories and requiring consular and diplomatic officers to undergo self-isolation at designated quarantine hotels.

4. TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Daily 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](#)

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

[WHO Coronavirus website](#)

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

March 9, 2022