

# Balancing Covid-19 risks with economic, social needs

## Overview

In the face of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Chief Executive Mr John Lee, on August 8, 2022, announced the adjustment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's quarantine arrangements for inbound travellers from overseas places or Taiwan, while guarding against the importation of cases. The Government's aim is to safeguard the wellbeing of citizens while reducing the disruption to normal business and social activities. This is a big step towards the resumption of normal inbound air travel, which would help attract tourists to Hong Kong and facilitate the essential travel of citizens, as well as reinject momentum into industries such as aviation, exhibition and commercial services.

## New Measures

- Two new measures, effective August 12, 2022, are:
  - **Shortening hotel quarantine<sup>1</sup> period** to 3 nights, followed by 4 nights of medical surveillance ("3+4").
  - **Introducing the Red and Amber Code system** with a view to controlling and monitoring in a targeted manner the premises that restricted persons are not allowed to enter.
- The two measures demonstrate the HKSAR Government's **policy of targeted anti-epidemic efforts with a view to achieving the greatest anti-epidemic effect with the least economic impact**. They are in line with the actual situation in Hong Kong, balancing the anti-epidemic and economic needs.
- With reference to the risk of virus transmission of inbound persons, through faster, more precise and scientific anti-epidemic measures, the number of restricted persons and the degree of restriction would be minimised.
- The HKSAR Government will continue to maintain the strategy of guarding against the importation of cases and upholding the principles of making targeted anti-epidemic efforts on a scientific basis, properly managing importation risks and providing convenience to citizens.

## Hotel Quarantine Period

After inbound air travellers arrive in Hong Kong, their quarantine period will be revised from 7 nights at designated quarantine hotels to 3 nights at designated quarantine hotels followed by 4 nights of medical surveillance at home or ordinary hotels.

## Red and Amber Code System

The system of Red and Amber Code for inbound travellers is introduced under "Vaccine Pass".

- Confirmed COVID-19 cases are issued the Red Code with a view to preventing them from leaving designated isolation locations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Required to be conducted at designated quarantine hotels

- Inbound persons who test negative for COVID-19 are issued the Amber Code during the period of medical surveillance after completing hotel quarantine.
- Persons with Amber Code are allowed to carry out low-risk daily activities, such as taking public transport to go to work, entering shopping malls, department stores and markets to buy daily necessities, etc.
- However, they will not be allowed to enter premises with higher risks, such as catering premises, thus significantly lowering the risk of the virus entering the community.
- After completing isolation or medical surveillance, the "Vaccine Pass" will revert to blue, permitting entry to premises that require "Vaccine Pass".
- The system record of Red and Amber Code will be regularly updated. The "LeaveHomeSafe" app will automatically correspond with the system through internet connection, and change the colour of the Vaccine Pass in accordance with system record in real time.
- Persons who do not have smart mobile phones may continue to use the paper form of Vaccine Pass. The QR Code Verification Scanner of different premises will recognise the colour of the Vaccine Pass to help with identification by the person-in-charge of premises.
- The updated "LeaveHomeSafe", same as its previous versions, does not have a registration procedure or tracking function.
- Except for confirmed cases and inbound persons, ordinary citizens may continue to use the current version of "LeaveHomeSafe" app and the blue Vaccine Pass to enter premises and are not affected by the new measure.

Persons under **Amber Code may not enter\*** -

Premises required to use the QR Code Verification Scanner:

- Catering premises (including bars or pubs), amusement game centres, bathhouses, fitness centres, places of amusement, indoor places of public entertainment, party rooms, beauty parlours, club houses, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises, massage establishments, indoor sports premises, swimming pools, cruise ships, indoor event premises, barber shops or hair salons and religious premises.

Premises required to inspect the Vaccine Pass visually as far as feasible:

- Outdoor places of public entertainment, outdoor sports premises and outdoor event premises.

Premises subject to administrative instructions of Vaccine Pass:

- Residential care homes for the elderly, residential care homes for persons with disabilities, schools, designated healthcare premises.

\*Students going to school and people going to work or seeking medical consultation may enter, while visitors or customers are not allowed.

Persons under **Red Code may not enter** -

- All the above restricted premises under the Amber Code, hotels or guesthouses (except persons who are required to undergo isolation at relevant hotels or guesthouses in accordance with their isolation orders), and premises subject to passive checking of Vaccine Pass:

shopping malls, department stores, markets and supermarkets.

### **Scientific Rationale for the New Arrangements**

- Relevant data show that there are about four confirmed cases among every 100 inbound persons.
- Under the new measure, hotel quarantine of three nights with two nucleic acid tests can detect more than three confirmed cases.
- Fewer than one remaining case would be discovered after the traveller leaves quarantine hotel and enters the community under the “medical surveillance” measure. But the traveller will be restricted from entering high-risk premises by the Amber Code.
- This **risk level is similar to the current positive rate in the local community** (Note: The positive rate in community testing centres/mobile testing stations is about 1.5%), and is **lower than the positive rate of local close contacts subject to home quarantine** (Note: The positive rate of home quarantine is over 18%, with a rate of over 7% by Day 3).
- **Requiring around 95% of uninfected inbound persons to undergo a longer period of hotel quarantine** in order to stop the less than 1% confirmed cases from entering the community is **not cost effective, and is not targeted**. It also affects the competitiveness of Hong Kong as an international financial and commercial centre.
- Compared to the 7-night hotel quarantine requirement (up to and including August 11), measures such as using the Amber Code to prevent inbound persons from entering high-risk premises, along with multiple nucleic acid tests<sup>2</sup> and daily rapid antigen tests (until Day 10 of arrival) can **better cater for the needs of most inbound persons**, especially those conducting business activities, as well as control the risk of community transmission caused by imported cases.

### **Useful Links**

Press release: [Government announces adjustments to quarantine arrangements for inbound persons](#)

Press release: [Government announces enhanced Vaccine Pass function](#)

Press release: [Health Bureau's response on arrangement for persons holding Vaccine Pass Amber Code to enter premises](#)

[Brief on new quarantine arrangements and government anti-epidemic policy](#)

[Brief on Red and Amber Codes and Adjusting Quarantine Arrangements for Inbound Persons from Overseas Places or Taiwan](#)

(Revision date: August 10, 2022)

---

**AUGUST 2022**

---

<sup>2</sup> Including Day 0 (i.e. conducted at the airport on the day of arrival), Day 2 (conducted at quarantine hotels), Day 4, Day 6, Day 9 (conducted at community testing centres/mobile specimen collection stations/recognised private laboratories)