

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 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"
 - Continue to contain the number of confirmed cases, better manage risks and enhance capability to respond to contingencies in order to prevent the healthcare system from overloading
- 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

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 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.

Social distancing [measures](#), effective until September 21, 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 four persons in public places unless exempted;
- Customers or users of all catering business premises and scheduled premises must use the "[LeaveHomeSafe](#)" mobile application and implement "[Vaccine Pass](#)" requirements (except persons aged 65 or above and aged under 12, persons with disability, and other persons recognised by the Government or organisations authorised by the Government);
- For **catering premises**, dine-in services are allowed from 5am to 11.59pm. No live performance and dancing activity is allowed. The maximum number of persons per table is eight, and banquets with no more than 120 persons are allowed;
- Bars or pubs can open for business from 5am to 1.59am of the subsequent day with a maximum number of four 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; and
- Subject to relevant requirements, local group tours with no more than 30 persons may be resumed.

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.

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 and five years respectively. [Eligible persons](#) can also receive the third or fourth dose of vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccination is provided to the public in a number of venues, including 17 community vaccination centres (CVCs), four children CVCs, 13 public hospitals, 56 general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority (HA), 17 Elderly Health Centres, 28 Maternal and Child Health Centres and five Student Health Service Centres under the Department of Health, as well as over 1,000 private clinics under the vaccination programme. The Government will also arrange outreach teams to vaccinate people in need.

Around 18,930,000 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. [A Red and Amber Code System](#) is introduced under the Vaccine Pass to differentiate persons with higher risk of infection. Confirmed cases are categorised as persons with a Red Code. They are not allowed to leave the isolation location. Inbound persons from overseas places or Taiwan who test negative for the virus will be categorised as persons with an Amber Code. They are able to conduct daily essential low-risk activities, but are not allowed to enter high-risk premises involving mask-off or group activities, as well as other premises requiring key protection. After completing isolation or medical surveillance, 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 8 **designated clinics** 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) can provide about 1,000 beds.

The Government is now operating the Penny's Bay CIF, Kai Tak CIF and three CIF hotels 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 four holding centres at Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Centre, Siu Sai Wan Sports Centre, Tin Shui Wai Sports Centre and Harbour Road 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 those patients among elderly people or persons with disabilities in the community upon referrals by the HA or the Department of Health. The quarantine centres at AWE and Kai Tak cruise Terminal receive 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.

Infected persons undergoing home isolation will be required to put on **electronic wristbands** to ensure compliance with the isolation requirement that they must not leave their household area so as to further minimise the chance of community transmission.

About 1,400 units in 3 operating quarantine centres.

In view of the latest epidemic development and risk assessment, infected persons who have been sent to CIFs and persons pending admission may conduct 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 Community Testing Centres (CTCs) and mobile specimen collection stations 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 40 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 CTCs 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 seven days.

The Department of Health launched a [declaration system for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using RAT](#) for people to register RAT positive results 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. 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 14 days can only board a flight for Hong Kong if they hold (i) a negative result proof of a PCR test for COVID-19 conducted with specimen collected within 48 hours before the scheduled time of departure of the aircraft, (ii) health declaration QR code, and (iii) a confirmation of room reservation in a designated quarantine hotel (DQH) for three nights from the day of arrival in Hong Kong (if they are holding pink health declaration QR code). Persons who have stayed in overseas places are required to be fully vaccinated and hold a recognised vaccination record.

Inbound persons from overseas places or Taiwan will be subject to the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at HKIA. Upon testing negative, they will be taken to DQHs by designated transport, and subject to quarantine under the "3+4" model, i.e. compulsory quarantine in DQHs for three nights, followed by medical surveillance at home or in other self-arranged accommodation for four nights, with multiple tests during medical surveillance and the three-day self-monitoring period thereafter.

Persons who have only stayed in places in the Mainland or Macao on the day of boarding for / arrival at Hong Kong and during the 14 days before that day are required to present negative result proof of a PCR test within three days prior to arrival if they arrive via airport. They are not required to undergo "test-and-hold" arrangement at HKIA.

Persons travelling to Hong Kong from overseas places or Taiwan, who have recovered from COVID-19, can be allowed to board a flight for Hong Kong if (i) they hold valid documentary proof to show that they were infected with the virus 14 to 90 days prior to boarding for Hong Kong and have recovered, and (ii) the result of the RAT conducted within 24 hours prior to boarding was negative.

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 the list 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](#).

For persons not arriving from the Mainland or Macao under the Return2hk or Come2hk Schemes, their compulsory quarantine period at designated places (such as home and hotel) will be three nights, followed by four nights of self-monitoring on the third day of arrival at Hong Kong. All inbound persons from the Mainland or Macao are required to undergo nucleic acid testing on Day 2 of arrival at Hong Kong.

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

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

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](#)

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

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

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

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