

# COVID-19: HONG KONG'S MULTI-PRONGED RESPONSE



## OVERVIEW

The HKSAR Government has implemented a **comprehensive and co-ordinated** approach to **contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the community** while maintaining Hong Kong's position as an international city and aviation hub. The Government response is guided by **three key principles**: responding promptly, staying alert to the situation, and working in an open and transparent manner. The Government has also adopted a new direction in fighting the pandemic to restore the city to normality in a gradual and orderly manner, and aim to achieve the goal by refraining from using a “stop and go” approach, reinforcing infection control measures in a targeted manner and reiterating the need for concerted community efforts. Social distancing measures will be adjusted with the concept of “vaccine bubble” as the basis.



## KEY FIGURES

### INFECTION TRACKER

Latest figures available at Centre for Health Protection's [geospatial dashboard](#)

#### VIRUS CONTAINMENT

Free testing services for patients attending general out-patient clinics and 17 Accident and Emergency Departments under the Hospital Authority (HA), and all private clinics and hospitals

Targeted Group Testing Scheme introduced in phases since mid-July 2020

A total of 19 community testing centres in operation to provide self-paid testing services at affordable price

COVID-19 vaccination is provided to the public in a number of venues, including 26 community vaccination centres (CVCs), 26 general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the HA and 7 public hospitals

About 8,931,400 doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered since the implementation of the vaccination scheme on February 26, 2021

About 2,300 units in 2 operating quarantine centres

Quarantine facilities for residents of residential care homes in AsiaWorld-Expo (AWE) and Pok Fu Lam

North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre near AWE provides negative pressure wards with 816 beds

Over 10.7 million reusable masks and 63 million surgical masks distributed free-of-charge to the public

## **SUPPORTING BUSINESS, PROTECTING JOBS**

Over \$300 billion (US\$38.5 billion) of relief measures – about 11% of GDP – via the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF) and in the 2020-21 Budget

Further measures of about \$9.5 billion (US\$1.2 billion) in the 2021-22 Budget to support enterprises

In 2020-21, about 31,000 time-limited jobs were created in the public and private sectors through the AEF. Further \$6.6 billion will be allocated to create around 30,000 time-limited jobs in 2021-22

16 types of support for specific sectors totalling \$21 billion

Additional support of nearly \$600 million to further help the hard-hit tourism industry

One more allowance round of about \$400 million under AEF to support 6 types of premises that have been closed for business for a relatively long period of time

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

In the 2021-22 Budget, a series of relief measures was announced, including:

- Reducing salaries tax and tax under personal assessment
- Providing a rate concession for domestic properties
- Granting a subsidy to residential electricity accounts
- Giving eligible recipients an extra half-month's standard payment allowance for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, Old Age Allowance, Old Age Living Allowance or Disability Allowance
- Paying the examination fees for school candidates taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination

Monthly public transport expense threshold of the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme relaxed from \$400 to \$200 between July 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021, and, starting from April, the monthly subsidy cap of the Scheme temporarily raised to \$500

2-year deferral of student loan repayments

## “SUPPRESS AND LIFT” STRATEGY



The HKSAR Government has implemented a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of the community. The “Supress and Lift” strategy is constantly adjusted according to the actual situation and views from experts and stakeholders.

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 four world-renowned experts, to advise the Government in a direct and timely manner.

The Government set up a **\$30 billion (US\$3.9 billion) Anti-epidemic Fund** to provide resources needed to fight the virus and ease the burden on people and businesses on **February 21, 2020**, and announced **two other rounds of \$137.5 billion (US\$17.6 billion) measures** on **April 8** and **\$24 billion (US\$3.07 billion) measures** on **September 16**, and a further **injection of \$6.4 billion (US\$81.5 million)** into the Fund on **December 17**.

## PROMOTING “SOCIAL DISTANCING”

All kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (including special schools and schools offering non-local curriculum) and tutorial schools continue face-to-face classes on a half-day basis in the 2021/22 academic year.

Until October 27, 2021, **social distancing rules** as follows:

- **Mandatory mask-wearing** in all public places, and when boarding or on board a public transport carrier, save for outdoor public places in country parks and special areas. Some exceptions apply, e.g. people engaging in strenuous physical activity outdoor
- **Group gatherings** of not more than 4 people in all public places unless exempted
- For **catering premises**, 4 operating modes ([additional infection control measures apply](#)):
  - Type A: Dine-in services can be provided from 5am to 5.59pm; number of customers at any one time not exceeding 50% of the normal seating capacity and no more than 2 persons at one table
  - Type B: Dine-in services can be provided from 5am to 9.59pm; number of customers at any one time not exceeding 50% of the normal seating capacity and no more than 4 persons at one table; patrons (excluding those only order takeaways) must scan the “LeaveHomeSafe” QR code with their mobile phones or register using a specified form before entering the premises
  - Type C: All staff must have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Within “Designated Zone C” of the premises, dine-in services can be provided from 5am to 11.59pm, with number of customers at any one time not exceeding 75% of the normal seating capacity and no more than 6 persons at one table, and all customers in the zone must scan the “LeaveHomeSafe” QR code with their mobile phones
  - Type D: All staff must have completed the full course of COVID-19 vaccination. Within “Designated Zone D” of the premise, dine-in services can be provided from 5am to 1.59am, no more than 12 persons at one table, two-thirds of the persons at the same table must have received the first COVID-19 vaccine dose, and all customers in the zone must scan the “LeaveHomeSafe” QR code with their mobile phones
- Bars or pubs, amusement game centres, bathhouses, fitness centres, places of amusement, places of public entertainment, party rooms, beauty parlours, massage establishments, club-houses, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments, mahjong-tin kau premises, sports premises and swimming pools allowed to open, subject to certain infection control requirements and restrictions
- Specified events (including meetings, forums, symposiums, exhibitions, ceremonial and celebratory events, as well as weddings and certain business meetings) can be conducted at **event premises** subject to relevant infection control requirements and restrictions
- **Hotels and guesthouses** are required to impose **restrictions on gathering activities** and **strengthen infection control measures**, including limiting the number of persons in a room, suite, meeting room or function room, or number of participants for any religious or cultural ritual in relation to a wedding

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- Licensed travel agents are allowed to organise tours of not more than 100 persons, including staff ([additional infection control measures apply](#)). The frontline staff must have received the first COVID-19 vaccine dose, or submit a declaration form and a medical certificate of being unfit to receive vaccination for health reasons and undergo testing 7 days prior to a group tour
  - Cruise operators can resume "cruise-to-nowhere" itineraries ([additional infection control measures apply](#))
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## COVID-19 VACCINATION

Being part of the two-pronged approach for the procurement of vaccines, the Government has joined the **COVID-19 vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX Facility)** led by the World Health Organization to procure vaccine doses for 35% of the population as a form of safety net to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society.

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.

Hong Kong residents aged 12 or above and eligible non-Hong Kong residents can receive vaccinations. Currently, vaccinations are provided in 26 CVCs, more than 2,300 private clinics participating in the programme, 26 GOPCs of the HA, 7 public hospitals, as well as designated clinics of the Department of Health. Outreach vaccination teams are being arranged to provide vaccination to residents of residential care homes and nursing homes in an orderly manner. Enterprises and organisations having a sufficient number of employees who would like to receive vaccination and a suitable venue with sufficient space can make use of an outreach vaccination service for their employees to receive vaccination in a more convenient way. Special channels of vaccination will also be provided to teenagers and students, including providing special appointments at CVCs and transport from and to schools, as well as outreach vaccination at schools.

On May 31, 2021, the Government announced the launch of the "Early Vaccination for All" campaign, which aims to help build an immune barrier as soon as possible by significantly raising the vaccination rate, thereby restoring normality to society sooner rather than later. To further encourage members of the public to get vaccinated as soon as possible and to express gratitude to those who have been vaccinated for their support in fighting the virus, the Government and different sectors in the community will roll out various measures and reward programmes.

The "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app has added a function to allow the public to store their vaccination records to facilitate easy display of the records when necessary.

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

People who are **close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases**, but are asymptomatic, will be **placed under compulsory quarantine** at dedicated quarantine centres.



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

Those placed under mandatory quarantine will be subject to **regular and surprise checks** (phone calls, visits) to ensure they are at the intended place of quarantine.

About 2,300 units in 2 operating quarantine centres, namely the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre on Lantau Island and Dorsett Kwun Tong.

**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.

The **North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre** near AWE has opened in phases from February 26 2021, providing negative pressure wards with 816 beds.

## BOOSTING SUPPLY OF SURGICAL MASKS

The Government introduced the **Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme** to help address the shortage of masks as well as to build up stock. As of September 30, 2021, all 20 subsidised production lines collectively delivered 469 million masks to the Government.

**Locally developed reusable masks** were distributed free to all Hong Kong citizens, except babies and infants.

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## 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.

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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. General out-patient clinics 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 47 HA general out-patient clinics, 121 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.

The **Universal Community Testing Programme**, launched between September 1 and 14, 2020, provided **free testing service** of COVID-19 to members of the public who could participate on a voluntary basis. A total of about 1,783,000 specimens were tested.

**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.

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.

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### 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** (i.e. Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, France, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Malaysia, Nepal, the Netherlands,

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Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States of America). For **medium-risk places** (i.e. all places outside China which are not high-risk or low-risk places), only Hong Kong residents and fully vaccinated non-Hong Kong residents are allowed to board flights for Hong Kong. For **low-risk place** (i.e. New Zealand), both Hong Kong and non-Hong Kong residents are allowed to board flights for Hong Kong.

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 72 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.

Hong Kong residents who have stayed in **high-risk places** on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day must undergo compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels for 21 days. Those who have been fully vaccinated and stayed in **medium-risk places** or **low-risk place** on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 14 days before that day are subject to a shortened quarantine period, i.e. 14 days and 7 days respectively.

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 subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days at home, and have to undergo 5 times of compulsory testing. For Hong Kong residents who have not been fully vaccinated and who have stayed in Taiwan on the day of arrival at Hong Kong and during the 14 days before that day (non-Hong Kong residents are not allowed entry), they are required to undergo a nucleic acid test within 72 hours prior to boarding a flight for Hong Kong, subject to compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels for 21 days, and have to be tested 6 times during quarantine.

The compulsory quarantine period of fully vaccinated persons arriving at Hong Kong from the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan can be shortened. Fully vaccinated persons who have stayed in the Mainland or Macao are subject to compulsory quarantine at home for seven days, while those who have stayed in Taiwan are subject to compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels for 14 days. All of them have to undergo several times of compulsory testing and self-monitoring in the subsequent 7 days after the compulsory quarantine period.

**Hong Kong residents returning from the Mainland** upon fulfilment of specified conditions, including not having been to places outside Hong Kong, the Mainland 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** upon fulfilment of specified conditions, including not having been to places outside Hong Kong, Guangdong Province 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](#).

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

From February 20, 2021, testing and isolation arrangements for **air crew members, sea crew members of goods vessels coming to Hong Kong for cargo operations** and other persons exempted from compulsory quarantine arriving Hong Kong, including **consular and diplomatic officers**, have been further tightened.

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#### 4. TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC



**Briefings** are held to regularly 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

## 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](#)

[Booklet on HKSARG Economic Relief Measures](#)

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

[WHO Coronavirus website](#)

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

October 20, 2021