

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (66) in DH CDB/9/12/6/4 Pt.1

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Dear Doctors,

**Appeal to collect specimens for COVID-19 testing from symptomatic residents and staff of residential institutions**

We write to solicit your support to offer COVID-19 testing for symptomatic residents and staff of residential institutions who are under your care for early detection of infected persons. Specimen bottles and laboratory forms will be available in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) and nursing homes (NHs) from mid-July 2020 onwards.

Old age and chronic medical diseases are risk factors for developing complications and deaths from COVID-19. Residents of RCHEs, RCHDs and NHs are more vulnerable to complications and fatalities once infected, as many of them are elders with multiple comorbidities. Besides, overseas experiences have showed that large outbreaks could occur in long term care facilities resulting in high mortality. The sources of infection may be from staff, visitors or residents. As such, it is very important to detect COVID-19 cases among residents and staff of residential institutions as early as possible. Prompt testing of COVID-19 for symptomatic residents and staff will enable earlier case detection, isolation and treatment, and hence reduce the risk of outbreaks in residential institutions.

The spectrum of clinical manifestations of COVID-19 is wide. Some infected persons may present with mild or non-specific symptoms only, especially during the early stage of disease. This poses challenges in relying on common clinical presentations to guide the need for testing.



To facilitate doctors to arrange testing for their patients who are residents or staff of residential institutions, the Department of Health (DH) has collaborated with the Social Welfare Department to provide specimen collection packs (containing specimen bottle, laboratory form and plastic bags, instructions on collecting specimen, specimen collection points and information on door-to-door specimen collection service) to RCHEs, RCHDs and NHs as stock.

If you encounter any symptomatic residents or staff from residential institutions at your clinic who bring along a specimen collection pack, please arrange COVID-19 testing by filling in the laboratory form inside the pack and then giving it back to them. Please kindly advise the patients to save a deep throat saliva (DTS) or sputum specimen using the bottle in the specimen collection pack (early morning specimen is preferred but non-early morning specimen is also acceptable). If you provide outreach medical service to residential institutions, please fill in the laboratory form available in the institutions and advise the staff to assist the patients to save a DTS or sputum specimen for testing. The DH has also prepared an infection control guideline to residential care institutions when they collect these specimens at the institutions (Chinese - [https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice\\_for\\_residents\\_undergoing\\_test\\_for\\_covid19\\_chi.pdf](https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice_for_residents_undergoing_test_for_covid19_chi.pdf); English - [https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice\\_for\\_residents\\_undergoing\\_test\\_for\\_covid19\\_eng.pdf](https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice_for_residents_undergoing_test_for_covid19_eng.pdf)). To ensure timely reporting of result, please clearly state your name, the name of your clinic and fax number in the laboratory form for receiving laboratory report.

The patients or the institutions can send the specimen together with the filled laboratory form to one of the 13 collection clinics of DH or 22 general out-patients clinics of the Hospital Authority **on the same day of specimen collection**. Please refer to the following webpage for the updated list of collection clinics (Chinese - [https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list\\_of\\_collection\\_points\\_tc.pdf](https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list_of_collection_points_tc.pdf); English - [https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list\\_of\\_collection\\_points\\_en.pdf](https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list_of_collection_points_en.pdf)). The patients and the institutions can also use the door-to-door specimen collection service provided by GOGOVAN, Pickup or Toby at their own cost. They can refer to the information below for service subscriptions and enquiries:

	GOGO VAN	Pickupp	Toby
Service subscription	<a href="http://www.gogovan.com.hk/covid-19-testing-en/">www.gogovan.com.hk/covid-19-testing-en/</a>	pupp.co/chp	<a href="http://www.hellotoby.com/en/ds/door-to-door-saliva-specimen-pick-up-service">www.hellotoby.com/en/ds/door-to-door-saliva-specimen-pick-up-service</a>
General enquiries	5681 4989 (hotline)	hk@pickupp.io	3703 3250 (hotline)
Collection hours	9am to 3pm, Monday to Friday	9am to 3pm, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 10.30am on Saturdays	8.30am to 3pm, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 10.30am, Saturdays and Sundays

Laboratory reports will normally be available on the next working day upon receipt of specimens and will be sent out by fax to the **requesting doctor's clinic as stated in the laboratory forms**. For cases tested positive for COVID-19, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) will contact the doctor, the patient and the residential institution for investigation. In general, staff in the clinic would not be considered as close contact if both the patients and staff wear surgical masks, the duration of consultation is short (less than 15 minutes) and there is no aerosol generating procedure performed in the clinic. It is important to adhere to infection control measures all the times. You may wish to refer to the guidelines published by the CHP for details (<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/resources/346/index.html>).

Yours faithfully,



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