

本署檔號 Our Ref. : (17) in DH CDB/9/12/5 Pt.1

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Dear Doctor,

Latest situation of upper respiratory tract infection outbreaks and appeal to collect specimens for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) testing

We write to update you on the latest situation of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) outbreaks in Hong Kong, and to solicit your support to offer COVID-19 testing for all patients with acute respiratory symptoms in order to identify infected persons in the community as early as possible amid the COVID-19 epidemic.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has recently received increased reports on institutional URTI outbreaks. In the recent weeks (from 25 Oct to 4 Nov), a total of 14 URTI outbreaks were reported, affecting a total of 122 persons. Among them, most of the outbreaks had occurred in schools and affected children.

As symptoms of URTI could also be a clinical manifestation of COVID-19, it could be difficult to differentiate them clinically. ***We strongly urge doctors to remain vigilant and to arrange COVID-19 test for all patients presenting with any acute symptoms, irrespective of their travel history and clinical severity.*** 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. Testing of respiratory pathogens at an earlier stage is crucial to facilitate early case detection and treatment, and hence reduce community spread. This is particularly important for cases occurring in schools and other institutional settings, where infectious diseases might spread more easily.



We would like to solicit your support to collect specimens from all patients with acute symptoms, which could be either ***(i) throat swab +/- nasal swab; or (ii) deep throat saliva***, for COVID-19 testing. If collection of the above is not possible, you may consider to collect stool specimen for

paediatric patients using sputum specimen bottles. If throat swab is collected from patients, the Public Health Laboratory Service Branch of the DH would also perform testing for other respiratory pathogens.

When ordering the test, please fill in the laboratory form (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/test_request_form_public_health_laboratory_centre_dh2546.pdf) and specify the type of specimen(s) taken. If the specimen taken is a throat swab +/- nasal swab, please indicate by writing (“throat and nasal swab” or “throat swab”) on the form.

For patients who collect deep throat saliva (DTS) specimen at home by themselves, please provide a specimen bottle and two specimen bags to the patient, to save a DTS specimen (*preferably early morning specimen but non-early morning specimen is also acceptable*).

The patients can send the specimen (throat swab +/- nasal swab/ DTS specimen/ stool specimen) together with the completed laboratory form to one of the 13 collection clinics of DH or the 22 general out-patients clinics of the Hospital Authority by themselves or their friends/ family members/ relatives **on the same day of specimen collection**. Please refer to the following webpage for the list of collection clinics with updated collection time (Chinese - 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). The patients and the institutions can also use the door-to-door specimen collection service provided by GOGO VAN, Pickup or Toby at their own cost. They can refer to the information below for service subscriptions and enquiries:

	GOGO VAN	Pickup	Toby
Service subscription	www.gogovan.com.hk/covid-19-testing-en/	pupp.co/chp	www.hellotoby.com/en/ds/door-to-door-saliva-specimen-pick-up-service
General enquiries	5681 4989 (hotline)	hk@pickup.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

The laboratory report when available will be sent to the requesting doctor by fax. For cases tested positive for COVID-19, the CHP will contact the doctors and the patients 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>).

Besides receiving seasonal influenza vaccination as early as possible for personal protection, you may advise your patients on the following measures to prevent upper respiratory tract infection:

- Surgical mask can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated; when hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub as an effective alternative;
- Cover the nose and mouth with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

Thank you again for your unfailing support and concerted efforts in the prevention and control of communicable diseases.

Yours faithfully,



(Dr. SK CHUANG)

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