

9 July 2020

Dear Doctors,

Appeal on Early Testing and Detection for COVID-19

Thank you for joining us in the fight against COVID-19. As you would be aware, there is recent upsurge with multiple local cases with yet unidentified source of infection. These clusters of local cases signify that there are silent/subclinical local transmissions going on in the community and the risk of major community outbreaks is high. Testing of COVID-19 at an earlier stage may enable earlier case detection, isolation and treatment, and reduce community spread. Hence, we have to remain vigilant and continue to enhance the collection of specimens for COVID-19 testing.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, malaise, dry cough and shortness of breath. Other symptoms include nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhoea, loss of taste or smell, skin rash or discolouration of fingers or toes, etc. Some people become infected but only have very mild or non-specific symptoms. Deep throat saliva specimens should be collected from patients with any symptoms, irrespective of their travel history and clinical severity. For paediatric patients, stool collection may be considered.

The Department of Health (DH) provides free testing of COVID-19 for private medical practitioners (PMPs). DH would provide specimen bottles for PMP upon request. The request form is available from: https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/specimen_bottles_request_form.pdf.

When ordering the test, the completed laboratory form (https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/test_request_form_public_health_laboratory_centre_dh2546.pdf) could be given to the patient together with a specimen bottle and two plastic bags.

Patients may return the specimen together with the completed laboratory form on the same day of specimen collection by themselves or family members/relatives/friends to one of the designated collection clinics by hand or via door-to-door delivery service at a charge to be paid by the patients. Specimen collection points are currently available at 13 clinics of DH and 22 General Outpatient Clinics of the Hospital Authority. The updated list of collection points can be found at

https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list_of_collection_points_en.pdf. For door-to-door specimen collection services, please refer to <https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html>.

Test result will normally be delivered to the requesting PMP by fax on the next working day upon receipt of specimens.

For more information about the Guidelines on Prevention of COVID-19, please visit the COVID-19 Thematic Website (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

Let us continue working together to break the transmission chain for disease containment through COVID-19 testing as indicated!

Co-signing parties:

1. Hong Kong Academy of Medicine
2. The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians
3. The Hong Kong Medical Association
4. The Hong Kong Doctors Union
5. The Association of Licentiates of Medical Council of Hong Kong
6. The Association of Private Medical Specialists of Hong Kong
7. The Hong Kong Society for Infectious Diseases
8. Centre for Health Protection, Department of Health