<u>Thursday, 28 July 2022</u>

Public hospitals update testing requirements for visitors

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (July 28) announced to update the testing requirements for visitors starting from next Monday (August 1) so as to minimise the risk of spreading virus in hospitals and enhance protection to patients.

Under the new arrangement, all visitors, including those who are recovered from COVID-19, must provide a negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test (PCR test) result obtained within 48 hours. Visitors may opt to perform the test in Community Testing Centres or mobile specimen collection stations. Free testing services will be provided when visitors indicate to the staff on-site that the purpose of the testing is for fulfilling the requirements for visiting patients in public hospitals. Visitors may also perform the test in any recognised organisatons. The specimen must be taken through combined nasal and throat swabs and must not be taken by the person to be tested.

The HA spokesperson said, "The HA understands the needs of family members to visit patients but also considers the necessity of balancing the risks of spreading virus. Therefore, it is needed to update the testing requirements to better protect our patients."

The testing requirements also apply to compassionate visits under specific circumstances. As for compassionate visiting arrangements for critical or end-of-life patients, testing requirements will remain unchanged. Visitors may provide either a PCR test negative result obtained within 48 hours or a rapid antigen test (RAT) negative result obtained within 24 hours before the visit. Visitor who submits a negative RAT result before the visit, is required to perform a PCR test and submit a negative test result subsequently within two days after the visit. In the situation of emergency, if the visitor cannot arrange testing in advance, a RAT must be performed, and the test result must be provided right after the visit. In addition, a negative PCR test result needs to be submitted within two days after the visit.

The spokesperson reiterated that visitors are also required to comply with the requirement of the Vaccine Pass, including having received the required dosage of COVID-19 vaccine or being recovered persons of COVID-19 in the Government's record, and holding the relevant vaccination record or record of recovered person. Visitors need to scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code when entering public hospitals. In addition, as public hospitals update testing requirements for visitors, persons having COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption Certificate with valid exemption in Vaccine Pass are allowed to visit if they fulfill the testing requirements from August 1.

Moreover, visitors are required to comply with the infection control measures, such as wearing surgical masks, temperature checking and filling in health declaration forms found in the HA webpage or the mobile app 'HA Go' 24 hours before the visit and show the QR code generated by the system to ward staff.

Hospital staff will contact relatives for appointment. Relatives are not required to call the hospital for booking themselves.

The HA hopes the patients' family members can understand and comply with the visiting arrangements under the current epidemic situation. All hospitals will continue to facilitate compassionate and video visiting as far as practicable.

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