<u>Wednesday, 5 January 2022</u>

Public hospitals strengthen response to the epidemic

In response to the rapidly changing COVID-19 outbreak, the Hospital Authority (HA) today (January 5) announced the latest arrangements to reduce the flow of people in public hospitals to strengthen infection control.

"Except for compassionate reason, all public hospitals will suspend special visit arrangements beginning this Friday. Frontline healthcare staff of Accident and Emergency Departments and general out-patient clinics will also heighten vigilance. Patients should proactively provide their travel history, occupation, contact with any confirmed patient or compulsory testing requirements as well, so that healthcare staff can order the tests as required and apply appropriate infection control arrangements and personal protective equipment," the HA spokesperson said.

"There are currently close to 300 confirmed patients admitted to the hospitals. To cope with the increasing pressure of hospital admissions for newly confirmed patients, the HA has reopened the community treatment facility at the AsiaWorld-Expo on January 2 to provide 500 beds in two exhibition halls. The HA has re-examined the first tier and second tier isolation beds and intensive care facilities in public hospitals. It will also consider using more exhibition halls at the AsiaWorld-Expo to add another 500 beds if needed."

The spokesperson said medical wards in public hospitals had recently reached full capacity amid the winter service surge. The HA will closely monitor the service situation and make service adjustments if necessary to ensure adequate beds and manpower to cope with the possible surge in COVID-19 patients within a short period of time.

Lastly, the HA spokesperson appealed to the public to get vaccinated as early as possible. Members of the public who have not yet been vaccinated should grasp the opportunity to get vaccinated soon while vaccinated people should take a booster dose at appropriate time to minimise the risk of infection or developing severe symptoms if infected.

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