

China's sweeping changes to COVID curbs

China this week announced the most sweeping changes to its anti-COVID measures since the pandemic began three years ago. The relaxation of rules includes allowing infected people with mild or no symptoms to quarantine at home and dropping testing for people traveling within the country.



Quarantine

China will allow home quarantine for asymptomatic COVID-19 cases and infected persons in mild condition as part of a new batch of measures to further relax the nation's COVID control.

Asymptomatic infections and confirmed cases in mild condition will be quarantined at home in general if their residences meet quarantine requirements.

They can also undergo centrally quarantined observation or treatment voluntarily, the Joint Preventive and Control Mechanism of the State Council, China's Cabinet, said yesterday.

During the home quarantine period, infected persons should receive two polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, one each on the sixth and seventh days of quarantine.

If the CT, or cycle threshold, values of the nucleic acid tests are above 35, the quarantine can be lifted. If results worsen, the infected person will be transferred to a designated hospital promptly.

Close contacts of infected persons are also allowed to quarantine at home for five days rather than spend a week in central quarantine as was previously required.

Close contacts can choose central quarantine voluntarily. They will be discharged if a PCR test returns negative on the fifth day.



Risk areas

The scale of high-risk areas is being narrowed down to residential buildings, floors and even single units.

Designations cannot be expanded casually to entire

communities, subdistricts or towns. Temporary lockdowns are prohibited.

Except for high-risk areas, people's movement should not be restricted, while work, production and business cannot be suspended.

Blocking of fire exits or gates of buildings and communities is prohibited. People should be allowed to go to hospitals or seek emergency services freely.



PCR tests

People will not be subjected to mass testing according to administrative regions, and the scope and frequency of testing will be further reduced.

No PCR or health code check is required for domestic travelers. There will be no more testing on arrival.

Apart from senior homes, welfare institutions, medical and child nurseries as well as schools and other places with special COVID requirements, no PCR or health code check is required.



Vaccines

Vaccination efforts should be ramped up among the elderly, with a focus on improving the vaccination rate among people aged between 60 and 79 years.

The vaccination rate among people aged 80 and older should also be accelerated. Vaccination services will be optimized by setting up special channels and temporary vaccination sites, and deploying mobile vaccination vehicles, according to the circular.

Primary-level medical

institutions and family doctors should deliver targeted services to key groups based on the health status of elderly people, according to the circular.



More

People are also free to buy fever, cough, antibiotic, cold and other non-prescription medicines, both online and in stores.

Special attention and psychological counseling services should be given to those in quarantine, patients, and frontline workers, the circular says.

Schools reporting no COVID-19 cases should function normally, and those affected by the pandemic should precisely designate risk areas and ensure normal functioning in unaffected areas, it adds.

(Xinhua/Shanghai Daily)