

Hong Kong ramps up COVID-19 testing amid outbreak

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Hong Kong's leader on Friday vowed to maintain its "zero" COVID-19 policy as it plans to ramp up virus testing, amid record daily infections.

Carrie Lam said during a news conference that the city would raise its testing quota to 200,000 daily, and eventually aim for 300,000.

She added that its so-called "COVID-zero" strategy is still "the best policy" for Hong Kong, which has aligned itself with China's policy to stamp out local transmission in the country, even as most of the world has moved toward living with the virus.

Hong Kong has reported some 1,300 cases since a new wave of infections began in late December of 2021, driven largely by the omicron variant. Local authorities require all positive coronavirus cases to go to hospital.

Lam also said Friday that the city was currently procuring "millions" of rapid antigen testing (RAT) kits, and that each resident will receive a kit.

"We are procuring our RATs in the tens of millions, we think that they will be arriving soon afterwards," she said.

Her announcement on Friday came shortly after [health officials](#) reported another 130 new local coronavirus infections, with almost half of them untraceable.

To reach "COVID-zero", Hong Kong has implemented one of the world's strictest quarantine measures and [border controls](#), and often locks down buildings across the city for mass testing if cases have been detected.

Lam said the "zero" transmission target would be maintained "until we've reached a more satisfactory vaccination rate."

Lam added that the Penny's Bay quarantine camp will be converted into a community isolation facility to admit asymptomatic patients, and that home isolation could be implemented for secondary contacts of those already deemed close contacts of an infected person.

She urged the public, especially the elderly, to stop being hesitant about vaccination.

"I hope that ... [elderly people](#) realize the need to get vaccinated because vaccination will greatly reduce the risk of a serious condition and fatality, and this will in a way alleviate the pressure faced by our healthcare system," Lam said.

Currently, only about 64% of Hong Kong's population has received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, behind countries like Singapore where nearly 90% of the [total population](#) has been fully vaccinated.

The city has currently reported a total of 14,013 infections since the beginning of the pandemic, with 213 deaths.

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