



Residents staying in hostels at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University and the Singapore University of Technology and Design, such as NUS' Prince George's Park Residences (above), will be offered a one-time free Covid-19 test next month. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

Free Covid-19 test for hostel residents at four unis in Jan

Ng Keng Gene

Residents staying in hostels at four autonomous universities here will be offered a one-time free Covid-19 test next month.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) said the testing is for residents at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU) and the Singapore University of Technology and Design.

The decision was made "in view of the high-density, communal living environment that may pose in-

creased risk of community transmission", said MOE, which strongly encouraged students to get tested.

An MOE spokesman said there are currently no plans to extend testing to all staff and students, and that the Education and Health ministries may consider doing so in future, should the need arise.

The spokesman added that the universities will share more details on the tests with their students "over the next few weeks".

Both NTU and SMU told students via e-mail or online circulars that antigen rapid tests will be used, and that those who test positive will undergo a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

Antigen rapid tests can produce results in about 15 to 30 minutes, unlike PCR tests that usually take a day or two.

While NTU's hostel residents will be tested on weekdays on campus between Jan 4 and 15, those at SMU's Prinsep Street Residences will be tested at the hostel on Jan 16 and 17.

Second-year NUS arts and social sciences student Tay Jia Shern felt that the free test was a good initiative to give students the assurance that no asymptomatic or undetected Covid-19 cases were among them.

"This proactive testing of residents is especially important since

it can act as an additional layer of detection before the school semester starts (on Jan 11), when unavoidable interactions between residents will increase," said the 22-year-old, who stays in a residential college.

"I will be willing to take the test because it should give me a greater peace of mind to know that I am not a carrier of the virus," he added. "Hopefully the overall results show that our individual efforts to prevent the transmission of the virus in the community have not gone to waste."

MOE also said the move is part of efforts to expand Covid-19 testing to selected community groups.

Last month, the multi-ministry task force tackling Covid-19 said it had been progressively conducting testing operations for some community groups, like stallholders, food delivery personnel and cashiers across the island.

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THUMBS UP FOR MOVE

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NUS ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
STUDENT TAY JIA SHERN