

'Make Covid **DIY** test kits available'

➤ The self-testing procedure will help detect infections faster as it can be done at home: Health experts

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia should emulate Singapore in making Covid-19 self-test kits available over the counter.

However, only medical personnel should confirm whether the results are positive or negative, said health experts.

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced on Monday that DIY (do-it-yourself) test kits will soon be available at pharmacies in the island nation to detect new infections faster.

He said the test kits are easy to use and will not cause any discomfort.

The DIY kit is in addition to other options such as the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test and the antigen rapid test.

Universiti Putra Malaysia consultant clinical microbiologist Dr Zamberi Sekawi said introducing the DIY test kit would be a good initiative as it is more convenient than going to a hospital to find out if one has contracted Covid-19.

However, he said the test kit should be put through rigorous evaluation and given the

green light for accuracy.

Similar to the home pregnancy test, a DIY Covid-19 test, which is an alternative to the PCR test, will help detect and enable isolation of those infected and likely to spread the virus.

"This will be a big help in slowing down the spread of infections. Since it can be done at home, it will be convenient for those who cannot travel to get tested," he told *theSun*.

The introduction of such over-the-counter test kits will relieve stress and anxiety arising from the increasing number of asymptomatic cases, Zamberi added.

"Easy access to testing is key to fighting the virus. If a person finds that he is infected, he can seek confirmation by going to a doctor for another test, and then take the next precautionary step to quarantine himself."

He said other methods, such as using dogs to sniff out infected persons, which is now used in Thailand, should also be considered as long as it does not violate religious beliefs.

Public health expert Prof Dr Rusli Nordin and Malaysian Medical Association president Datuk Dr M. Subramaniam said that DIY test kits are only for screening, and the results must still be confirmed through a PCR test.

"Methods such as the DIY test are supplementary and should only be deployed where feasible."

Subramaniam said since Malaysia has been strongly advocating increased screening to help identify hotspots rapidly, the DIY test kits will help.

"However, the way must also be open for people to call a government hotline for advice if they test positive."