

'Stay safe as we're not out of the Covid-19 woods yet'

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PETALING JAYA: The over 2,000 Covid-19 daily infections recorded of late, although mostly mild, are signs that Malaysians should remain steadfast in taking safety precautions, say health experts.

Checks by *The Star* at pharmacies in Hulu Kelang found that the sale of Covid-19 test kits had dropped by between 30% and 50%.

"Our sale of test kits had dropped so much that we had to launch promotions to finish our stock," one salesperson said.

Commenting on this, occupational health, emergency and public health expert Dr Hanafiah Bashirun said this was worrying as it meant people were giving less attention to Covid-19.

"Some are afraid of getting tested

because they know if they are found positive, they will be stuck at home and can't go anywhere," he said.

Since the country is transitioning to the endemic stage, he said some people were no longer concerned about the disease.

Dr Hanafiah said in the endemic phase, the number of cases is expected to fluctuate given that not everyone would abide strictly by the standard operating procedure (SOP).

"Our numbers will fluctuate because not everyone will follow the guidelines. But for me, it is simple.

"You should take care of yourself and your family," he said.

Former deputy health director-general Prof Datuk Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman, however, is not too concerned with the drop in the sale of test kits.

"You should take care of yourself and your family."

Dr Hanafiah Bashirun

The people, he said, should only be tested if they have symptoms.

Universiti Putra Malaysia epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman noted that about 10% to 30% of Malaysians failed to abide by the SOP.

"Maintaining the SOP is important to protect the high-risk groups."

"The SOP should be practised as usual, even though severe cases are fewer now, as reflected by the number of people hospitalised and those

who receive treatment in intensive care units, compared to during the Delta wave last year.

"We have to maintain the SOP as recommended as we have to protect those who can't be vaccinated medically and also to protect high-risk groups who could potentially be exposed to severe infection if a breakthrough infection occurs," she said.

Dr Malina said data on those who have been admitted and treated in hospitals and death cases should be highlighted through the media so that the public can remain aware of the importance of the SOP.

She also suggested for a further review of the SOP, should the data continue to show that the majority of cases are "mild", and there is no obvious threat of incoming waves or negative impact on the health-care system.