

2019/20 seasonal influenza vaccination programmes to be launched in October

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (July 17) announced that the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) and the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) 2019/20 will be launched on October 9 and 23 respectively, providing subsidised or free seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) to eligible persons in phases.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications. The DH launched the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme in 2018/19 to provide SIV to students of primary schools through outreach teams where schools' responses and outcome have been positive. To further enhance the vaccination rate of schoolchildren, the DH will regularise the Pilot Programme in 2019/20 in order to cover more primary schools, and will also extend the coverage to kindergartens and child care centres as a pilot programme.

"Under the '2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) – Primary Schools' (Primary School Outreach) and the '2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) – Kindergartens / Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres / Child Care Centres (Pilot)' (KG/CCC Outreach (Pilot)), the DH will reach out to schools to provide schoolchildren with SIV through a Government Outreach Team or a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) Team. All schoolchildren in participating schools, irrespective of Hong Kong resident status, can receive free vaccination. The two programmes will start on October 23 and 9 respectively. So far, over 430 primary schools and 700 KG/CCC have signed up for the programmes."

At present, 65 doctors have been recruited to participate in the PPP for Primary School Outreach where a subsidy of \$100 per dose will be given (vaccines will be provided by DH). Meanwhile, 63 doctors have been recruited to participate in the PPP for KG/CCC Outreach (Pilot) where a subsidy of \$260 per dose will be given (vaccines will be provided by participating doctors). The DH informed doctors early in February this year about the new arrangements for various school outreach programmes in 2019/20 and invited them to join the programmes. The DH also reminded and assisted them in June to make preparations and place vaccine orders in a timely manner.

Regarding the application of vaccines, two types of seasonal influenza vaccines are currently registered in Hong Kong, namely inactivated influenza vaccines (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) (i.e. nasal vaccine). Both IIV and LAIV are recommended for use in Hong Kong in 2019/20 by the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the CHP. Subject to the supply of nasal vaccine, the DH will conduct a trial to provide this vaccine in schools with outreach service provided by the DH where suitable. The trial aims to test the feasibility and logistical

arrangements in applying the LAIV in vaccination programmes.

Primary schools, KGs and CCCs not participating in the two programmes above are encouraged to arrange as early as possible outreach vaccination for their students through the "Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed)". Schools can invite doctors providing outreach vaccination under the VSS from the list published on the CHP's website to arrange outreach SIV service at their campus. The Government will provide a subsidy of \$210 per dose to participating doctors.

The eligible groups and arrangements for free SIV in the public sector under the GVP and subsidised SIV in the private sector under the VSS in 2019/20 will remain unchanged (see Annex 1 and 2). Regarding VSS, the Government will provide a subsidy of \$210 per dose to participating doctors. The DH has informed the participating doctors about the arrangements in 2019/20, and reminded them to make preparations and place vaccine orders in a timely manner.

In addition, under the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme (RVP), the subsidy for visiting medical officers will be increased from \$70 to \$100 per dose. Moreover, the DH will expand SIV to cover residents and healthcare workers in residential child care centres under the RVP.

The Government is now procuring a total of 567 000 doses of IIV for the GVP, and 245 000 doses of IIV and 2 000 doses of LAIV for School Outreach (Free of Charge) in 2019/20. Meanwhile, as of July 7, 2019, about 583 000 doses of seasonal influenza vaccines had been administered via the VSS, 491 000 doses had been administered to eligible groups under the GVP and 121 000 doses administered under School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme in 2018/19. The total number of doses administered amounts to 1 195 000 doses, which represents an increase of 46 per cent compared to that in 2017/18.

The SCVPD advised that the composition of the recommended vaccines for the 2019/20 influenza season should be in line with the World Health Organization's latest recommendations. The quadrivalent influenza vaccines to be used in the 2019/20 Northern Hemisphere influenza season contain:

- * A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- * A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2)-like virus
- * B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus
- * B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus

If trivalent influenza vaccine is being used, the influenza B component shall contain a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus.

For IIVs, quadrivalent IIV is preferred to trivalent IIV due to the additional protection against one more lineage of influenza B offered by quadrivalent IIV. Locally registered IIVs are recommended for use among people six months of age or older, including those who are healthy, pregnant women and those with chronic medical problems. For LAIV, which is a quadrivalent vaccine, it can be used for people 2 to 49 years of age except

those who are pregnant, immunocompromised or have other contraindications, details of which can be referred to in the [SCVPD recommendations](#).

The spokesman said, "Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive SIV for personal protection. Based on past epidemiological patterns, the winter influenza season usually occurs from January to March/April each year. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza."

The CHP has been holding meetings and briefings with relevant stakeholders including health care providers, community partners and the educator sector to inform them of the arrangements and encourage their participation in the vaccination programmes. Publicity will also be stepped up to promote vaccination among eligible and other groups.

For more details of the vaccination programmes, the public may enquire through the CHP's telephone number (2125 2125) or visit the CHP's [Vaccination Schemes page](#).