

2023/24 seasonal influenza vaccination programmes to start tomorrow

With the launch of the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP), the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) Programme and the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme (RVP) 2023/24 tomorrow (October 5), the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (October 4) appealed to members of the public to receive free seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) to better protect themselves in the coming influenza season.

"The local winter influenza season usually starts in January, while the summer surge happens from July to August. Following a seven-week short influenza season from April to end-May this year, Hong Kong has entered the summer influenza season in late August. The latest surveillance data on percentage of detections testing positive for seasonal influenza viruses among respiratory specimens and influenza-related admission rate at public hospitals revealed that the local seasonal influenza activity has continued to increase. Together with increase in the number of outbreak of influenza-like illness since the school year started in early September, it is expected the summer influenza season would persist for a period of time," a CHP spokesman said.

"SIV is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as reducing influenza-related hospitalisation and death. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early. 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. Children and the elderly should be vaccinated as soon as possible," the spokesman added.

The GVP will in phases provide free SIV for Hong Kong residents in the eligible groups starting tomorrow. Details are provided at www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/202324_gvp_provisional_table_en.pdf.

For residents and staff of residential care homes (RCHs) for the elderly and RCHs for persons with disabilities; non-institutionalised persons with intellectual disabilities (PID) receiving service and staff working in designated institutions serving PID; as well as residents and staff of residential child care centres, they can receive door-to-door SIV service from outreach team starting from tomorrow under the RVP.0

Community-living elderly persons aged 65 or above can get free SIV at 14 designated Elderly Health Centres (EHCs) of the DH and general out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority from October 24 onwards, while members of the DH's EHCs can receive vaccination at their respective EHCs from tomorrow.

Starting from tomorrow, the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School

Outreach (Free of Charge) Programme will start providing free outreach SIV service for students at secondary and primary schools, as well as kindergartens, kindergarten-and-child care centres and child care centres. According to local experience, school outreach can double the rate of receiving SIV to an average of 70 per cent, effectively strengthening the immunity barrier of school children. Schools which have yet to participate should enrol as soon as possible.

In addition, the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) was launched on September 28. Eligible groups of Hong Kong residents (including persons aged 50 or above, pregnant women, children and adolescents aged 6 months to less than 18 years, PID, persons receiving Disability Allowance and recipients of the standard rate of "100% disabled" or "requiring constant attendance" under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme) can receive subsidised influenza vaccination at clinics of private doctors enrolled in the scheme. Please visit the eHealth System (Subsidies) website (apps.hcv.gov.hk/Public/en/SPS/Search) for the list of doctors.

"COVID-19 is also a kind of respiratory tract infection, which will not leave us within a short period of time. Co-infection of COVID-19 and influenza is possible and high-risk individuals should receive booster COVID-19 vaccine at appropriate times. COVID-19 vaccine can be co-administered with, or separated from, SIV. If people wish to space out COVID-19 vaccine with SIV, an interval of 14 days is sufficient," the spokesman reminded. For more details on co-administration of SIV and COVID-19 vaccines, please refer to the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106096.html).

The public, especially those in eligible groups, may call the CHP's telephone line (2125 2125) for enquiries during office hours or visit the CHP's [Vaccination Schemes page](#) for more information on the above vaccination schemes.