

Acting CE and Principal Officials call on public to receive seasonal influenza vaccination early (with photos)

The Acting Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, together with a number of Principal Officials and Under Secretaries received seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) today (October 20) and called on the public to receive SIV early to get prepared for the coming winter influenza season.

Mr Lee said, "Influenza can cause not only serious illnesses in high-risk individuals but also infection in healthy persons. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications. More evidence indicates that a person who contracts influenza and COVID-19 at the same time would have a higher risk of serious complications and death, and influenza vaccination may reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation and the length of stay. As such, receiving SIV and getting COVID-19 vaccination are both important. I call on members of the public, especially the high-risk groups including elderly people, to receive SIV early for additional protection to their personal health."

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, was also present today to show her support. She said, "Based on past epidemiological patterns, the winter influenza season usually starts in January. However, the exact time of arrival cannot be predicted. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, I appeal to the public to receive vaccination early. Influenza vaccines are safe and effective. Except those with known contraindications, all persons aged six months or above are recommended to receive SIV."

The recommended interval between administration of SIV and COVID-19 vaccines (Comirnaty or CoronaVac) is at least 14 days. Elderly people who are fit for SIV are also fit for COVID-19 vaccination. They should receive COVID-19 vaccination early as long as they are not suffering from acute illnesses.

The Government continues to provide free or subsidised SIV for eligible groups under the Government Vaccination Programme, Vaccination Subsidy Scheme, Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach and Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme in 2021/22. Eligible persons include residents of residential care homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities as well as those in residential child care centres, children aged six months to under 12 years, persons aged 50 or above, pregnant women, persons with intellectual disability and recipients of Disability Allowance. For more information, members of the public may visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health

(www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html) or call the CHP at 2125 2125 during office hours.

Apart from vaccination, maintaining good personal and environmental hygiene, in particular the proper use of surgical masks, performing hand hygiene at all times, maintaining a balanced diet, having regular exercise, not smoking and avoiding alcohol consumption are also effective in preventing infection from seasonal influenza.

