

Announcement of appointment arrangements for shortened intervals between COVID-19 vaccine doses

Taking into account of the expert recommendation of shortening the time intervals between COVID-19 vaccine doses, the Government announced today (March 4) that the booking system of the designated website of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk) has been enhanced to enable persons of the relevant groups to make appointments for receiving the third dose as soon as possible for self-protection.

On February 25, the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health and the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel jointly recommended to shorten the time intervals between COVID-19 vaccine doses. It also strongly recommended a third dose of the BioNTech vaccine for adults who have received two doses of the Sinovac CoronaVac vaccine or the Fosun/BioNTech Comirnaty vaccine as soon as three months after they had received their second dose. Priority should be accorded to persons aged 60 and above in view of their higher vulnerability to severe illness and higher fatality rate from COVID-19 infection in the local context (please see details in the press release: www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202202/25/P2022022500777.htm).

Booking will be open to the following groups starting from 8am on March 5

* For persons aged 60 or above who have received two doses of the Sinovac or the BioNTech vaccine, the time interval for receiving the third dose will be shortened from six months after the second dose to three months. Members of the public please make an appointment for receiving their third dose via the online booking system as soon as possible.

* For children and teenagers aged 5 to 17, the time interval between the first two doses of the BioNTech vaccine will be shortened from 12 weeks to eight weeks. Persons making new appointments via the updated online booking system can make a booking for their first dose of the BioNTech vaccine and reserve a time slot for receiving their second dose eight weeks after their first dose at the same time. For children and teenagers who have made their appointments for or have received the first dose of the BioNTech vaccine but yet to meet the eight-week interval for their second dose, they can also make or change their appointment of the second dose via the updated system.

* Immunocompromised children aged below 12 can make appointments for receiving the third dose four weeks after receiving the first two doses of the Sinovac or the BioNTech vaccine. Please bring the relevant medical certificate to the designated vaccination venue on the day of third dose

vaccination in order to confirm the eligibility of vaccination. A medical certificate template is available at the designated website of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/pdf/Medical_Certificate_of_Third_Dose_Eligibility_for_Immunocompromised_Persons.pdf).

Booking will be open to the following group starting from 8am on March 11

* Persons aged 12 to 17 who have received two vaccine doses can make an appointment for the third dose.

* Those who have received two doses of Sinovac vaccine can receive the Sinovac or the BioNTech vaccine as their third dose three months after the second dose.

* Those who have received two doses of the BioNTech vaccine can receive the BioNTech vaccine as their third dose five months after the second dose. They can also choose the Sinovac vaccine as their third dose according to their personal preference.

Booking will be open to the following groups starting from 8am on March 21

* Immunocompromised persons aged 12 or above can make an appointment to receive an additional dose, i.e. the fourth dose, with a time interval of three months since the third dose. Please bring the relevant medical certificate to the designated vaccination venue on the day of fourth dose vaccination in order to confirm the eligibility of vaccination. If the relevant medical certificate has been issued for their third dose vaccination, they can bring along the relevant certificate within the validity period when receiving vaccination.

To prioritise the vaccination need of the elderly and children, the Government will arrange persons aged 18 to 59 who have already received two vaccine doses to make appointments for the third dose three months after their second dose via the online booking system at a later stage. The arrangement will be announced separately.

A Government spokesman said, "The current epidemic situation is of grave concern. Elderly persons and children are our focus of protection through vaccination. We have set up Community Vaccination Centres (CVCs) dedicated for children, teenagers and elderly persons to enable them to get vaccinated as early as possible. The four Children Community Vaccination Centres (CCVCs) providing the BioNTech vaccine are located at Hong Kong Children's Hospital, Yuen Chau Kok Sports Centre, Gleneagles Hospital Hong Kong and Tsuen Wan Sports Centre. In addition to the CVC at Hong Kong Central Library, starting from March 7, the Hong Kong Spinners Industrial Building CVC will provide the Sinovac vaccination service, dedicated to persons aged 3 to 17 and 60 or above. We will continue to set up similar vaccination centre to provide service to children and elderly persons.

"Both COVID-19 vaccines available in Hong Kong are safe and highly effective in protecting against severe illness and death from COVID-19 infection. We appeal members of the public who are not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a much higher fatality risk after COVID-19 infection, to get vaccinated as early as possible for the sake of their health. We also call on parents to arrange vaccination for their children as early as possible for effective protection," he added.

Points to note

Persons receiving the vaccination have to bring along original identity documents. If children's identity documents do not bear the child's photo, such as the birth certificate, then school documents (such as school handbooks) bearing a photo of the student must be presented at the time of vaccination.

For children and teenagers aged 3 to 17, they must bring along a consent form signed by their parents on the date of vaccination. As the BioNTech vaccine for children requires a special dilution procedure, children aged 5 to 11 must receive the BioNTech vaccine at the four CCVCs and must be accompanied by their parents/guardians in person when receiving vaccination. They must bring along a consent form of the following version signed by their parents on the date of vaccination

(www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/pdf/Consent_Form_for_Fractional_BioNTech_Vaccination_ENG.pdf).

For persons aged 12 to 17 receiving the BioNTech vaccine and children and teenagers aged 3 to 17 receiving the Sinovac vaccine, they must bring along a consent form of the following version

(www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/pdf/Consent_Form_for_COVID19_Vaccination_ENG.pdf) signed by their parents on the date of vaccination. In addition, children aged 3 to 11 receiving the Sinovac vaccine must be accompanied by their parents/guardians in person when receiving vaccination.