

# Dispatch arrangements of quadrivalent seasonal influenza vaccines

The Department of Health (DH) today (November 27) was informed by a licensed drug wholesaler, Sanofi-Aventis Hong Kong Limited (Sanofi), that it has decided to take a precautionary measure to suspend the market supply of a batch of quadrivalent seasonal influenza vaccines (SIVs) (box label: R3J721V; syringe label: R3J72) and arrange to dispatch a new batch of quadrivalent SIVs to local private healthcare facilities as soon as possible.

According to the information provided by Sanofi, around 175 000 doses of the affected batch of SIVs have been imported to Hong Kong and part of the batch has been distributed to the DH, the Hospital Authority and healthcare facilities. Based on the DH's preliminary statistics, there are around 100 000 doses of unused vaccines in Hong Kong. Sanofi has committed to contact relevant organisations and arrange to dispatch a new batch of vaccines as soon as possible.

"The DH has immediately suspended the use of the affected vaccines. The DH's services, including the Elderly Health Centres, will suspend seasonal influenza vaccination service until the supplier dispatched a new batch of SIVs. On the other hand, the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme under the DH is not affected by the incident as SIVs used under the pilot programme are supplied by another company," a spokesman for the DH said.

The DH also reminded residential care home operators and visiting doctors to pay attention on whether they have procured the affected quadrivalent SIVs. If they have, they should suspend the use of such vaccines and contact Sanofi for relevant arrangements.

"The DH will be in touch with the Hospital Authority and relevant healthcare facilities. We will also closely monitor the relevant arrangements and keep in close contact with Sanofi. So far, the DH has not received any adverse reports in connection with the affected batch of SIVs. Members of the public are advised to consult healthcare professionals if they feel unwell after receiving seasonal influenza vaccination," the spokesman said.

According to the record of Sanofi, more than 20 million doses of quadrivalent SIVs have been supplied around the world in the current influenza season. So far, it has not received any report about the safety of vaccines being affected.

According to Sanofi, samples of the concerned batch of quadrivalent SIVs were found to contain white particles by Taiwan authority. The company said that it has not received any report regarding the presence of white particles in the same batch of SIVs currently supplied to Hong Kong, and that there is so far no evidence showing that the quality, safety or efficacy of the SIVs supplied to Hong Kong have been affected, or that safety risk is imposed to

those receiving the vaccines.

The DH has requested Sanofi to submit a full investigation report regarding the presence of white particles in the affected batch of SIVs. The DH has also asked Sanofi and another supplier providing quadrivalent SIVs to Hong Kong to import additional quantities of vaccines to meet the local demand.

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## [CE meets President of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences \(with photo\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, met the President of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Professor Xie Fuzhan, at Government House this afternoon (November 27). The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, was also present.

Mrs Lam welcomed the visit of Professor Xie and his delegation to Hong Kong to attend the International Forum on China's Economy and Policy 2018, which was jointly held today by the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office and the National Academy of Economic Strategy of the CASS. The forum, themed "Forty Years of Reform and Opening Up", attracted some 300 participants.

The CASS, a premier academic organisation and comprehensive research centre in the fields of philosophy and social sciences in the Mainland, has co-organised the International Forum on China's Economy and Policy with the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) a number of times, fostering policy research on economic and social issues of the two places. Mrs Lam said that the excellent policy research conducted by the CASS on the nation's reform and opening up, in addition to the modernisation process, could serve as an important reference for the HKSAR in integrating into the overall development of the country and seizing opportunities brought by the country's development. She expressed the hope that the CASS and the Chinese Institute of Hong Kong – the CASS branch set up in Hong Kong last year – would help promote exchanges and co-operation in humanities and social sciences between Hong Kong and the Mainland, including the nurturing of talent, universal education and research in the relevant areas, to help young people in Hong Kong deepen their understanding of the country and strengthen research to assist Hong Kong's future development.



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## Import and sale in HK of romaine lettuce harvested in California, US, suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department said today (November 27) that the import into and sale in Hong Kong of romaine lettuce harvested in California, the United States (US), has been suspended with immediate effect, in the light of the latest information announced by the US authorities concerned on the incident of US romaine lettuce suspected to be contaminated with *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). The CFS urged the trade to stop using and selling romaine lettuce harvested in California immediately should they possess it.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS has been closely following up on the US romaine lettuce incident and has earlier held all romaine lettuce from the US and Canada for testing at the import level. According to the latest information provided by the US Food and Drug Administration upon investigation, the outbreaks of *E. coli* infection were likely linked to romaine lettuce harvested in California. The CFS has decided to immediately suspend the import into and sale within Hong Kong of romaine lettuce harvested in the area concerned.

"The Centre will continue its surveillance of romaine lettuce harvested in other areas of the US at import and retail levels to safeguard food safety."

People will contract *E. coli* causing gastro-intestinal disease through consumption of contaminated water or undercooked and contaminated foods. Intestinal bleeding and serious complications such as haemolytic uraemic syndrome may also develop in some people. Moreover, due to poor personal hygiene, person-to-person transmission of this pathogen is possible through the oral-faecal route. *E. coli* cannot survive under high temperature and can be killed by thorough cooking.

The CFS urges the public not to consume romaine lettuce from California and unknown sources.

The CFS has informed the US authorities concerned of the import suspension and will alert the trade. It will continue to closely monitor the latest developments of the incident and take appropriate follow-up action. Investigation is ongoing.

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## **HA suspends seasonal influenza service**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Following the announcement by the Department of Health (DH) today (November 27) on the immediate suspension of the use of a batch of quadrivalent seasonal influenza vaccines (box label: R3J721V; syringe label: R3J72), the Hospital Authority (HA) spokesperson said today that the HA has informed all public hospitals and out-patient clinics to suspend using influenza vaccines of the affected batches immediately.

The HA has immediately suspended the vaccination service in all public hospitals and out-patient clinics. Meanwhile, the HA has requested the pharmaceutical company concerned to replenish the stock with other unaffected batches of influenza vaccines. The seasonal influenza vaccination service is expected to resume gradually from Saturday (December 1).

As of today, there has been no adverse reaction report related to vaccinations of the affected batches of influenza vaccines. Members of the public feeling unwell after vaccination should seek medical advice. The HA will continue to liaise closely with the Department of Health for an update on the latest situation.

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## **Excessive cadmium found in Chinese cabbage sample**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (November 27) announced that a Chinese cabbage sample was detected with cadmium, a metallic contaminant, exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the incident.

"The CFS collected the Chinese cabbage sample at import level for

testing under its routine Food Surveillance Programme. The test result showed that the sample contained cadmium at a level of 0.16 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 0.1ppm," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the importer concerned of the irregularity and is tracing the source of the affected product," the spokesman added.

According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap 132V), any person who sells food with metallic contamination above the legal limits is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

"Based on the level of cadmium detected in the sample, adverse health effects will not be caused under usual consumption," the spokesman said.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.