

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

The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, led a number of Principal Officials and Under Secretaries to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) today (October 5) and called on members of the public to get vaccinated early in preparation for the winter influenza season which is around the corner.

Mr Lee said, "Receiving SIV is one of the most effective means for preventing seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as reducing the risk of hospitalisation and death arising from influenza. Upon entering the summer influenza season this August, Hong Kong has recorded since then multiple serious and death cases. These involved not only children but also unvaccinated persons in most of the cases. We are expecting a high chance for seasonal influenza outbreak this winter given that it will be our very first winter after the lifting of all mandatory mask-wearing requirements. In this connection, I strongly appeal to high-risk groups in particular to receive SIV as early as possible.

"Moreover, getting infected with influenza and COVID-19 at the same time will be more likely to result in serious condition or even death. Citizens may consult healthcare personnel when receiving SIV and arrange for COVID-19 vaccination in due course for better self-protection."

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, who had received SIV last week, was also present today. He said, "As shown by the latest surveillance data on the percentage of respiratory specimens in which seasonal influenza virus was detected and the influenza-related admission rate at public hospitals, the local seasonal influenza activity level is seen to be on a rising trend, alongside a significant increase in the number of outbreak of influenza-like illness since the school year started in early September. All seasonal influenza vaccination programmes have commenced today to provide free or subsidised SIV for eligible persons. Members of the public are advised to receive vaccination as early as possible."

People belonging to the priority groups, i.e. persons aged 50 or above (including the elderly living in residential care homes), adults aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities, persons aged 6 months or above and with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers, should receive SIV as early as possible. For dual protection, those in the aforementioned groups should receive an additional COVID-19 vaccine booster in a timely manner with a dosing interval of at least six months after the last dose or recovery from COVID-19 infection (whichever is later), regardless of the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses they received. A COVID-19

vaccine can be co-administered with, or separated from, an SIV. An interval of 14 days is sufficient if people wish to space out a COVID-19 vaccine with an SIV.

The Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Subsidy Scheme 2023/24 was launched on September 28, whereas the Government Vaccination Programme, the SIV School Outreach (Free of Charge) Programme and the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme were launched today as planned. Members of the public may call the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) at 2125 2125 or visit the [CHP's Vaccination Schemes webpage](#) for more details.

