

CHP announces end of summer influenza season

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (November 2) announced the end of the summer influenza season which started in late August this year. The CHP reminded members of the public to continue to maintain personal, hand and environmental hygiene against respiratory tract infection, including seasonal influenza, COVID-19 and Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection, and stressed that vaccination can effectively prevent serious influenza and COVID-19 cases.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "According to the latest surveillance data, the percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for seasonal influenza viruses received by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) was 5.4 per cent, and the admission rate with the principal diagnosis of influenza in public hospitals was 0.24 per 10 000 population in the week ending October 28. These data have returned below the baseline level. The predominating virus during the period was influenza A(H3), accounting for around 85 per cent of the respiratory specimens collected and with subtype results by the CHP's PHLSB and the Hospital Authority."

Moreover, the weekly number of reported influenza-like illness outbreaks decreased from 91 in the week ending September 23 to 23 in the week ending October 28. For severe or death cases, there were 51 severe influenza cases (including death cases) in the week ending September 30, while the figure for the week ending October 28 was lowered to 28.

The surveillance data above indicated the end of the influenza season which started in late August this year. Although the 10-week long summer influenza season has ended, the spokesman reminded members of the public that, based on historical data, influenza season usually arrives in the winter months (late 2023 to early 2024). All persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for personal protection.

The CHP reminded members of the public that as influenza viruses and the SARS-CoV-2 virus may both spread at the same time, getting influenza and COVID-19 vaccination is of vital importance in protecting the healthcare system from being overwhelmed. The DH welcomes the joint statement made by 12 medical and relevant organisations earlier on October 19 appealing to infants, children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, the elderly and those with chronic diseases to receive SIV as soon as possible and complete their COVID-19 vaccination. The CHP strongly urged members of the public, particularly children, the elderly and chronic disease patients, to receive vaccination as early as possible for effective protection against COVID-19 and influenza. Details of receiving both COVID-19 vaccination and seasonal influenza vaccination are available online (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106096.html). Eligible persons can make a

reservation on the designated website (booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk).

The spokesman appealed again to symptomatic individuals, even if the symptoms are mild, that they should wear surgical masks and seek medical attention promptly to reduce the risk of spreading the virus to high-risk persons. Personal, hand and environmental hygiene should also be maintained at all times.

For the latest information, please refer to the [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) published by the CHP.