

Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme

Phase 2 to start tomorrow

The Department of Health (DH) will roll out the second phase of the Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme (CRCSP) tomorrow (January 1), extending the coverage to Hong Kong residents aged 56 to 75, i.e. those born in the years 1943 to 1963, to enrol in subsidised screening tests for the prevention of colorectal cancer.

The CRCSP is heavily subsidised by the Government. Participants shall attend a medical consultation by an enrolled primary care doctor (PCD) to receive a Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) screening. A government subsidy of \$280 per consultation applies including the second consultation to follow up on a positive FIT test result. Meanwhile, under the standard colonoscopy service package targeted at FIT-positive participants, the subsidy amount is \$8,500 if polyp removal is necessary, while the amount is \$7,800 if no polyp removal is needed. Colonoscopy specialists may charge a co-payment not exceeding \$1,000 when providing the standard colonoscopy examination service.

The Programme, which started on August 6 this year, will be implemented in three phases to subsidise asymptomatic Hong Kong residents aged 50 to 75 to undergo screening tests. Phase one covers people aged 61 to 75 as the first batch to join, while phase three will further extend the coverage to those aged 50 to 75. Details and the commencement date of phase three will be announced in due course.

Details of the screening pathway are as follows:

- (1) Eligible persons must first make an appointment with a PCD participating in the Programme. After enrolment in the Programme, the participant will receive a government subsidy to undergo the FIT; and
- (2) If the FIT result is positive, the participant will be referred to see a colonoscopy specialist who has enrolled in the Programme to receive a colonoscopy examination subsidised by the Government in order to find out the cause of bleeding.

FIT-negative participants under the CRCSP should receive FIT re-screening every two years until they pass the age of 75 in order to maximise the Programme's capability to prevent colorectal cancer. Since this September, FIT-negative participants have started receiving reminders via SMS, email or post when they are due for re-screening. They can visit any enrolled PCD clinic to receive subsidised FIT re-screening services.

Colorectal cancer is the most common cancer locally. In 2016, there were 5,437 newly diagnosed colorectal cancer cases, accounting for 17.3 per cent of all new cancer cases, or about one in six new cancer cases. In 2017, colorectal cancer resulted in 2,138 deaths, accounting for 14.9 per cent of

all cancer deaths, or about one in seven cancer deaths. It is the second most common cause of cancer death in Hong Kong, coming only after lung cancer.

Colorectal cancer is preventable through adopting a healthy lifestyle and well-organised screening. Prognosis of colorectal cancer can be significantly improved by early detection and prompt treatment. Eligible persons are encouraged not to miss joining the CRCSP.

Eligible persons are also reminded to enrol in the electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS) if they wish to join the Programme. For details, please visit the eHRSS website at www.ehealth.gov.hk or call the Registration Office at 3467 6300.

For more information and the list of enrolled PCDs, please visit the DH's thematic website www.colonscreen.gov.hk.

The DH also operates a dedicated hotline (3565 6288) to provide direct response to the public regarding CRCSP during office hours.