

Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme starts today

The Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme started today (August 6) to subsidise in phases asymptomatic Hong Kong residents aged 50 to 75 to undergo screening tests for the prevention of colorectal cancer.

Launched by the Department of Health (DH), the Programme will be implemented in three phases, with people aged 61 to 75, i.e. those born in the years 1942 to 1957, as the first batch to join starting from today to undergo screening tests. Phase two will cover those aged 56 to 75 while phase three will extend to those aged 50 to 75. Eligible participants will be defined by their years of birth and the details and commencement dates of phases two and three will be announced in due course.

The Programme is heavily subsidised by the Government. Participants will attend a medical consultation by an enrolled primary care doctor (PCD) to receive 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, 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.

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 colonoscopy examination subsidised by the Government in order to find out the cause of bleeding.

To date, 685 PCDs have enrolled in the Programme covering nearly 1 009 locations, and 97 per cent of these PCDs will not charge any co-payment. In addition, 171 colonoscopy specialists have joined the Programme to provide colonoscopy examination services at 336 service locations. If no polyp removal is necessary, about 80 per cent will not require additional charges. If polyp removal is needed, about 70 per cent will not require additional charges. Those who are interested in the Programme can visit the DH's thematic website www.colonscreen.gov.hk for more information and find a list of enrolled PCDs.

The DH in September 2016 launched the Colorectal Cancer Screening Pilot Programme to subsidise asymptomatic Hong Kong residents born from 1946 to

1955 to undergo screening tests in phases. As of July 26 this year, about 78 000 eligible persons (i.e. 9.5 per cent of the target population) had participated in the Pilot Programme and undergone FIT screening.

FIT-negative participants under the Pilot Programme are also reminded to receive FIT re-screening every two years in order to maximise the Programme's capability to prevent colorectal cancer. Starting from the end of September this year, the first batch of FIT-negative participants, who have joined the Pilot Programme since 2016, will begin to receive re-screening notifications via SMS, email or postal mail. They can visit any enrolled PCD clinic to receive subsidised FIT re-screening services.

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

The DH has also set up a dedicated hotline (3565 6288), which is operated by trained staff to provide a direct response to public enquiries as a more convenient service for the public.