

DH follows up suspension of BioNTech vaccination

The Department of Health (DH) had an urgent meeting with Fosun Industrial Co., Limited this morning (March 24) to follow up matters relating to deviations in the packaging material of the BioNTech vaccine. Fosun Pharma and BioNTech have initiated an investigation and promised to report to the DH as early as possible. At this stage, suspension of BioNTech vaccination in Hong Kong will continue temporarily until the investigation is complete.

A spokesman for the DH emphasised that risk to product safety has not been found. The suspension of vaccination is for the sake of prudence and as a precautionary measure to continuously ensure vaccine safety. Booking and vaccination have been suspended at all the Community Vaccination Centres until further notice. The Government will closely monitor the incident and will timely announce the latest situation and arrangement as soon as possible.

According to the consensus interim recommendations published in January by the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection, the schedule of two doses of BioNTech vaccine should be administered at least 21 days apart. Currently, there is limited information on the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy of receiving the vaccine if more than 21 days have elapsed since the first dose. Analysis of the phase III efficacy data of BioNTech vaccine showed that it was feasible to administer second dose from 19 to 42 days. The World Health Organization, according to the current available clinical data, also recommends that the interval of two doses of BioNTech vaccine could be extended to 42 days. On the other hand, if more than 21 days have elapsed since the first dose, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Health Canada both recommend the second dose to be given at the earliest opportunity without repeating the series.