

DH to extend Free Measles Vaccination Mop-up Programme to adult Hong Kong residents

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 29) announced that the Free Measles Vaccination Mop-up Programme will be extended to cover adult Hong Kong residents, with the aim of boosting the community's herd immunity against measles. Hong Kong adult residents who are non-immune to measles may receive free measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccines at designated clinics starting from next Monday (February 3). The service period will last for around six months.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles. Following the implementation of a one-off mop-up programme for healthcare workers, airport staff and foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) working in Hong Kong last year, the CHP is extending the programme to cover more residents, hoping to further boost the community's herd immunity against measles as a public health strategy to prevent and control measles."

The spokesman added, "This programme will cover all adults who are non-immune to measles, especially those born between the years 1967 and 2002. In particular, the CHP also encourages participation from people who are non-locally born, people of all ethnicities, post-secondary students, FDHs and people who have frequent contact with tourists. These groups can receive free MMR vaccines under this programme if they are non-immune and are Hong Kong residents."

The spokesman explained that persons who have received two doses of measles vaccines at or after 1 year old, or who have had laboratory confirmed measles infection, are considered to be immune to measles and do not require MMR vaccination.

Hong Kong residents who fulfil the following criteria are eligible to receive free MMR vaccination under the programme:

1. Born between 1967 and 2002, and has not received two doses of measles vaccines at or after 1 year old, and does not have laboratory confirmed measles infection; or
2. Born before 1967, and has laboratory evidence of testing non-immune to measles (i.e. tested negative/indeterminate for measles immunoglobulin G (IgG)).

For those who are uncertain about their past measles vaccination history and do not have laboratory confirmed measles infection, please refer to the charts in the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/101938.html) to

understand if there may be a need for vaccination. Before vaccination, healthcare workers would also perform health assessment to assess whether mop-up measles vaccination is recommended.

The spokesman appealed to the public that, as vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles, all people, except for pregnant women and those who are known to be unfit for vaccination, should consider to receive measles vaccination. Regarding the schedule, non-immune adults who have no history of receiving any measles-containing vaccine or with unknown vaccination history are advised to receive two doses at least four weeks apart. Only one dose is required for those who had already received one dose of measles vaccination in the past.

Eligible Hong Kong residents who wish to join the programme must make prior booking for vaccination. For details on designated clinics, please refer to www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/101938.html. In addition, residents are reminded to bring along their Hong Kong identity card or Certificate of Exemption (both original and one copy). Those born before 1967 are required to bring along a laboratory test result report confirming non-immunity to measles (both original and one copy) in addition to the above.

The spokesman said, "The designated one-off mop-up programme providing free measles vaccination to FDHs working in Hong Kong will end on February 15. Eligible FDHs can receive measles vaccination before the programme ends. For details and appointment methods, please visit the CHP's website at www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102004.html."

The MMR vaccines to be used in the mop-up programme were additionally procured by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government in April last year from one of the suppliers of registered MMR vaccines in Hong Kong, Merck Sharp & Dohme (Asia) Ltd (MSD). These vaccines were allocated to the Hong Kong market from other markets amid tight supply for MMR vaccines around the world. Although they were manufactured by the same manufacturer with the same master formula (including gelatin originated from porcine skin collagen as one of the inactive ingredients) and finished product specifications as the MMR vaccine registered by MSD in Hong Kong, the packing of these vaccines is labelled in Spanish.

For information on the free mop-up programme for measles vaccination and measles, please visit the designated webpage for the programme (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/101938.html) and the measles designated webpage (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/100419.html).