

# Director of Health views arrangement for Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (with photos)

The Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam, and the Controller of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH), Dr Edwin Tsui, visited Po Leung Kuk Lee Siu Chan Kindergarten-Cum-Nursery in Kwun Tong this morning (November 9) to view the implementation of the school outreach seasonal influenza vaccination service and appealed to parents to arrange early seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for their children with a view to having better protection in the coming influenza season.

The school has joined the outreach vaccination service for the fifth year and about 50 pupils have received SIV this season, with the figure representing around 75 per cent of the total number of pupils of the school. The DH procured and delivered the vaccines in advance while a Public-Private-Partnership Team visited the school today to provide vaccination to the schoolchildren.

"We are delighted with the smooth outreach vaccination service. According to local experience, school outreach can double the rate of receiving SIV, effectively strengthening the immunity barrier of schoolchildren. We look forward to the continuous and full support from schools and parents as home-school co-operation has been of vital importance in enhancing vaccination coverage," Dr Lam said.

Dr Tsui added that SIV is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as greatly reducing hospitalisation and death. For schoolchildren, it can also reduce absenteeism and is beneficial to their personal health and learning. Although the summer influenza season, which started in late August this year and lasted for 10 weeks, has ended, based on historical data, influenza season usually arrives in the winter months (late 2023 to early 2024). As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, parents are reminded to arrange SIV for their children as soon as possible.

Dr Lam said that 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. He stressed that influenza vaccines are safe and effective. All persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive SIV for personal protection. Dr Lam also appealed to high-risk groups such as people aged 50 to 64, the elderly and immunocompromised patients to receive SIV early via the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme to safeguard the health of themselves and their families. In addition, co-infection of COVID-19 and influenza is possible and high-risk individuals should receive booster COVID-19 vaccine at appropriate

times.

To enhance the vaccination rate of schoolchildren and to assist in arranging outreach vaccination services by schools, the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) Programme was launched in 2018/19 and has been regularised since 2020/21. Under the Programme, the Government arranges for a Public-Private-Partnership Team or a Government Outreach Team to provide free SIV for schoolchildren at schools. Schools not participating in the above free-of-charge programme can invite doctors providing outreach vaccination under the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme from the list published on the CHP's website to arrange outreach SIV service at their campus under the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach (Extra Charge Allowed). Around 330 secondary schools, around 570 primary schools and around 870 kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres have enrolled in the above two programmes, accounting for about 65, 85 and 75 per cent of the schools concerned across the territory.

For eligible children not receiving SIV through school outreach vaccination, parents can arrange for subsidised vaccination for their children in clinics of private doctors enrolled in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme. As of October 31, under the various SIV programmes, the vaccination coverage rate for children aged 6 months to under 2 years was about 9.6 per cent, whereas that for children aged 2 years to under 6 years, aged 6 years to under 12 years, and aged 12 years to under 18 years was about 31.0, 26.6 and 10.2 per cent respectively.

"The DH has always been keeping close liaison with our partners. Under the concerted efforts of the education sector, healthcare sector, parents and other stakeholders, a total of about 189 900 doses of SIV have been administered for children aged 6 months to 18 years under the various SIV programmes accounting for an increase of nearly 40 per cent comparing with the same period of last year with a 20 per cent of overall vaccination coverage rate. This also reflects that parents and schools attach great importance to vaccination," Dr Lam said.

As of October 31, about 280 700 doses of seasonal influenza vaccines had been administered via the Government Vaccination Programme and 494 600 doses via the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme. The total number of doses administered by various programmes was about 888 400, representing an increase of about 20 per cent comparing with the same period of last year.

Members of the public may call the CHP's hotline (2125 2125) for enquiries during office hours or visit the [Vaccination Schemes page](#) for more information on the vaccination programmes.

