

## 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 St Thomas' Church Kindergarten in Shek Kip Mei this morning (December 15) to view the implementation of the school outreach seasonal influenza vaccination service and appealed to members of the public to receive free seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) to better protect themselves in the coming winter influenza season.

The school has joined the outreach vaccination service for the third year and over 140 pupils have received one dose of SIV this season, with the figure representing over 80 per cent of the total number of pupils of the school.

"A Public-Private-Partnership Team visited the school to provide vaccination to the schoolchildren today while the vaccines were procured and delivered by DH colleagues. We are delighted with the smooth outreach vaccination service and 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 vaccinating schoolchildren can largely reduce influenza-related complications, hospitalisation and death; potentially reduce absenteeism; and provide numerous benefits to them with respect to personal health and learning. The winter influenza season usually starts in early January. However, the exact time of arrival cannot be predicted. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, parents are reminded to arrange for seasonal influenza vaccination for their children as soon as possible.

Although the overall local seasonal influenza activity remains at a low level, and there were no reports of influenza-like illness (ILI) institutional outbreaks in the recent two weeks (November 28 to December 11), three ILI institutional outbreaks (all in kindergartens/child care centres) were recorded in the previous two weeks (November 14 to 27). As schools are collective assembly places, infectious diseases could easily spread among people through their daily contact.

Under the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge), the Government will arrange for a Public-Private-Partnership Team or a Government Outreach Team to provide free SIV for schoolchildren in primary schools as well as kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres. Around 480 primary schools and around 760 kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres have enrolled in the above programme. Primary schools, kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres not participating in the 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 100 primary schools and around 70 kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres have enrolled in this programme. The number of primary schools of the above two programmes represents about 85 per cent of the schools concerned across the territory, while that of kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres represents about 75 per cent of the schools concerned across the territory.

For eligible children who will not receive 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 December 12, under the various SIV programmes, the vaccination coverage rate for children aged 6 months to under 6 years was about 36.3 per cent, whereas that for children aged 6 years to under 12 years was about 64.0 per cent.

"Support from schools and parents has been continuing ever since the SIV programmes this year commenced in October. The doses administered for children aged 6 months to under 12 years saw a rise of 11.5 per cent over the figure for the same period last year. It is encouraging and reflects that parents and schools attach great importance to vaccination," Dr Lam said.

As of December 12, about 371 500 doses of seasonal influenza vaccines had been administered via the Government Vaccination Programme and 414 900 doses via the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme. The total number of doses administered by various programmes was about 1 058 800.

Dr Lam stressed that SIV is one of the most effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as reduce influenza-related hospitalisation and death. He said that persons getting influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and have a higher death rate. Influenza vaccination may reduce hospitalisation and the length of stay. It is important to receive both SIV and COVID-19 vaccination. Given 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.

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.

