

Director of Health views arrangements 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 Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association Tai Hon Fan Nursery School this morning (November 4) to view the implementation of the school outreach seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) service and appealed to parents to arrange early SIV for their children with a view to having better protection in the coming influenza season in winter.

It is the first time for the school to choose to provide both injectable inactivated influenza vaccines (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccines (i.e. nasal vaccines) (LAIV) as the hybrid mode. Forty-two pupils received SIV during the vaccination activity. 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.

"To boost the SIV coverage rate among schoolchildren, modified arrangements have been made under the SIV School Outreach Programme (SIVSOP) this year. Kindergartens and child care centres can choose to provide both IIV and LAIV at the same or different outreach vaccination activities. We are delighted with the smooth outreach vaccination service under the new arrangements. According to local experience, school outreach can double the rate of receiving SIV, effectively strengthening the immunity barrier of schoolchildren. We look forward to 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 for their personal health and learning. As the weather becomes cool, and with reference to previous surveillance data, the CHP expects that activity of COVID-19 and seasonal influenza may increase at the end of the year, and more school outbreaks will be reported. The CHP has noticed that some schools still have not arranged SIV outreach activities. We strongly urge schools that have yet to enrol in the SIV outreach programme to arrange SIV outreach activities as soon as possible to protect students and reduce the chance of influenza outbreaks in schools. For eligible children not receiving SIV through school outreach activities, parents should arrange vaccination for their children at clinics of private doctors enrolled in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme.

Dr Lam stressed that all persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive SIV for personal and family protection. As of October 27, the vaccination coverage rate for

children aged 6 months to under 2 years was at a low level of about 8.4 per cent. To strengthen vaccination services and boost the SIV coverage rate among children aged 6 months to under 2 years, the DH's Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) are open to all children aged 6 months to under 2 years for SIV this year. Children aged 6 months to under 2 years can receive SIV services at any MCHCs when they are attending appointments. Parents may also book an appointment for their children to receive vaccinations at designated MCHCs via the online booking system:

booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/sivfhs/index.jsp. Parents are advised to arrange SIV for their children as early as possible to protect health of their children. In addition, co-infection of COVID-19 and influenza is possible, and high-risk individuals should receive booster COVID-19 vaccine at appropriate times.

Under the SIVSOP, secondary schools, primary schools, kindergartens, and child care centres can arrange outreach vaccination teams to provide free SIVs to schoolchildren. The DH will provide vaccines to participating schools and subsidy of \$105 per dose to doctors.

In addition, schools can also invite doctors to arrange outreach services for injectable IIV and/or nasal LAIV on their campuses under the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach. Participating schools can select a doctor and make arrangements for the outreach activity, including the type of vaccine provided. The Government will provide a subsidy of \$260 per dose to the doctor. In addition to schoolchildren, other individuals such as school staff and students' parents can also receive SIVs during the outreach vaccination activity.

At present, around 890 kindergartens and child care centres (81 per cent), 620 primary schools (93 per cent) and 410 secondary schools (80 per cent) have joined the SIV School Outreach Programmes. As of October 27, 2024, around 640 schools have completed the first dose vaccination, and more than 145 400 students have received SIV under School Outreach Programmes.

"The DH has always maintained close liaison with our partners. Through concerted efforts from the education sector, healthcare sector, parents and other stakeholders, a total of about 204 100 doses of SIV have been administered for children aged 6 months to 18 years under various SIV programmes, accounting for 22.3 per cent of overall vaccination coverage rate. We urge early childhood educators to join hands in appealing the parents to arrange for their children to participate in SIV, and at the same time to play their part in educating parents on the importance of vaccination to encourage more young school children to get vaccinated. With increased vaccination coverage, the protection for children could be strengthened," Dr Lam said.

As of October 27, about 331 800 doses of seasonal influenza vaccines had been administered via the Government Vaccination Programme and 496 600 doses via the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme. Together with 126 900 doses via the SIVSOP, a total of 955 300 doses of SIV have been administered through various programmes.

For the latest information, please refer to the CHP's [influenza page](#) and [Vaccination Schemes page](#).

