

“Early Vaccination for All” campaign Launched

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, announced the launch of the "Early Vaccination for All" campaign by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government today (May 31). The campaign aims to help build an immune barrier in Hong Kong as soon as possible by significantly raising the vaccination rate during the three-month-long critical period from now until the end of August, thereby restoring normality to society sooner rather than later and allowing more than a million students to go back to school safely in the new school year. She also pointed out that vaccination is expected to be an indispensable requirement for trips to the Mainland and overseas places for travel and work in the future.

"The most important – if not the only – way for Hong Kong to get through the epidemic is large-scale vaccination of the public to build an immune barrier for the entire community. In fact, there has been an obvious decrease in the number of confirmed cases and the death toll in a number of countries or cities with high vaccination rates and the relevant social distancing measures are being relaxed gradually," Mrs Lam said.

"In Hong Kong, today is the 95th day since the launch of the vaccination programme on February 26. As at yesterday, about 2.36 million doses of vaccines had been administered and about 1.36 million of them were the first dose, accounting for 21 per cent of the population aged 16 or above in Hong Kong. About 1 million people have also received the second vaccine dose.

"To further encourage members of the public to get vaccinated as soon as possible and to express gratitude to those who have been vaccinated for their support in fighting the virus, the Government and different sectors in the community will roll out various measures and reward programmes. I have also sent letters to more than 100 developers, retailer associations, employer federations and associations of Chinese fellow townsmen to appeal for their support for the campaign. Other public institutions will also join and details will be announced in due course," she said.

Facilitating vaccination

From June 1 to August 31, government employees will be entitled to a day of vaccination leave for each vaccination dose received so that they can have sufficient time to recuperate after getting vaccinated. Moreover, all government employees who were vaccinated on or before May 31 this year will be allowed to apply for one day of authorised absence that may be taken by March 31, 2022, for each dose already received.

The Government appeals to statutory bodies/public organisations, as well as employers of enterprises, to encourage their staff to get vaccinated, and

to arrange vaccination leave or other facilitation measures for them.

In addition, the Government has conducted the outreach vaccination programme since mid-May to provide vaccination services to staff of enterprises and groups in a more effective and convenient manner. In the coming three months, the Government will be more proactive in promoting and making the best use of the outreach vaccination service. Interested parties can call the hotline (3904 1490) for enquiries and arrangements.

Facilitating gatherings

The Government will further relax social distancing measures with the vaccine bubble concept as the basis, including relaxation of the maximum number of persons allowed at premises and group gatherings, the maximum capacity of premises and operation hours, the types of activities allowed, the distance among groups, and the mask-wearing requirement. Among them, the Government is considering allowing vaccinated persons to bring children and elderly persons who are not vaccinated to dine together at Type D catering businesses, and raising the number of persons allowed to be seated at the same table in bars/pubs, clubs/nightclubs and karaoke establishments.

Vaccination in lieu of regular testing

Starting from today, the vaccination in lieu of regular testing approach is being implemented for front-line government employees to safeguard their health. Front-line employees who have received the first dose of a vaccine and provided their vaccination record could be exempted from regular testing. Those who are not vaccinated are required to undergo COVID-19 testing using combined nasal and throat swabs on a biweekly basis.

Vaccination promotion activities

The Government welcomes the incentives actively provided by the commercial sector and organisations to encourage members of the public to receive the COVID-19 vaccines. It understands that the commercial sector and many organisations are considering to organise lucky draw activities for this. In order to facilitate their applications for the relevant licence(s) (including the Trade Promotion Competition Licence and Lottery Licence), the Office of the Licensing Authority of the Home Affairs Department has set up the COVID-19 Vaccination Promotion Lucky Draw Hotline (2117 2783), to provide one-stop consultation services for licence applications, and will expedite the processing of the relevant applications.

Facilitating the keeping and showing of vaccination records

Apart from bringing along paper vaccination records, members of the public can currently download their electronic vaccination records via

the "iAM Smart" mobile app, take a photo or use the screen capture function to save the QR code of their vaccination records in the photo album of their smartphones. Starting later this week, members of the public can also save their vaccination records and QR codes in the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app version 2.0 and display their vaccination records for verification when necessary. "iAM Smart" iPhone users can also save their QR codes in Apple Wallet when downloading their electronic vaccination records.

In addition, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer will assist industries in developing suitable applications and systems for scanning vaccination records to ensure their authenticity in order to enable members of the public to participate in different promotions.

The fourth wave of the local epidemic has basically come to an end. However, the community must stay vigilant amid the current situation and prepare well for a possible fifth wave of the epidemic that could strike at any time. The fifth wave of the epidemic will probably hit with higher transmissibility and more serious infectious mutant strains. Only through the "Early Vaccination for All" campaign can Hong Kong build a barrier for protection with no delay to safeguard every citizen, including the young ones and those who are unfit to get vaccinated.