

End of winter influenza season 2020

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (February 13) announced the end of the winter influenza season. Members of the public are, however, advised to continue to maintain personal, hand and environmental hygiene against respiratory diseases.

"Hong Kong entered the winter influenza season in early January this year. The influenza activity peaked around late January, started to decrease continuously and returned to the baseline level in early February. This season lasted for about five weeks from the week of January 5, to the week ending February 8," said a spokesman for the CHP .

According to the latest surveillance data, the percentage of respiratory specimens that tested positive for seasonal influenza viruses received by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch peaked at 18.76 per cent in the week ending January 25 and declined to 5.67 per cent in the week ending February 8. The predominating virus of this influenza season has been influenza A(H1) (around 80 per cent), followed by A(H3) (around 16 per cent), with very few influenza B positive detections. The overall admission rate with a principal diagnosis of influenza in public hospitals also decreased from the peak of 0.91 per 10 000 population to 0.21 per 10 000 population in the same period.

The number of institutional influenza-like illness (ILI) outbreaks peaked at 65 in the week ending January 18 and decreased to 39 in the week ending January 25. Only five outbreaks were recorded each in the following two weeks after the announcement of the extension of Chinese New Year holidays. A total of 153 outbreaks were recorded from January 5 to February 8, affecting 801 persons. As of yesterday (February 12), two outbreaks had been recorded this week affecting 13 persons.

For adults, 182 cases of influenza-associated admissions to intensive care units or death (113 deaths) were recorded from January 5 to February 12. In 2020, there were six severe paediatric cases (under 18 years old) reported (no deaths). Among them, five had not received seasonal influenza vaccinations for the current season.

As of February 2, about 537 600, 486 800 and 316 800 doses of seasonal influenza vaccine (SIV) had been administered via the Government Vaccination Programme, the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme and the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) respectively. The total number of doses administered by the above programmes was about 1 341 000 doses, representing an increase of 17 per cent from the figures for the same period in the 2018-19 season.

"Although the winter influenza season has ended, members of the public aged 6 months or above who have not yet received any SIV in the 2019/20 season can still receive it for personal protection against seasonal

influenza. However, persons who have already completed seasonal influenza vaccinations in the 2019/20 season are not recommended to receive any further doses of SIV within the same season.

"Meanwhile, the public should continue to adopt strict personal, hand and environmental hygiene practices against respiratory illnesses and other infectious diseases," the spokesman added.

The public may visit the CHP's [influenza page](#) and weekly [Flu Express](#) for more information.