

Free influenza vaccination to start on October 23

With the launch of the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) 2019/20 next Wednesday (October 23), the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (October 17) reminded eligible persons to receive free seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) in a timely manner to better protect themselves in the coming winter influenza season.

The GVP will in phases provide vaccination to Hong Kong residents in the following eligible groups through designated public clinics:

- Pregnant women who are Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients or Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges (Certificate) holders can get vaccination in Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the DH or Antenatal Clinics of the Hospital Authority (HA);
- Children aged 6 months to under 12 years receiving CSSA or holding the Certificate can receive vaccination in MCHCs (6 months to under 6 years) and Student Health Service Centres of the DH (6 to under 12 years). Those seeking telephone booking for eligible primary school children may call the Student Health Service hotline (2856 9133);
- Elderly persons aged 65 or above attending public clinics, persons who are CSSA recipients or Certificate holders aged 50 to under 65 and those aged below 50 with chronic medical problems, eligible in-patients (including paediatric patients) of the HA and eligible paediatric out-patients, and eligible persons with intellectual disabilities and community-living persons receiving Disability Allowance can receive vaccination during their follow-up or stay in public clinics/hospitals; and
- Residents of homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities, public/institutional healthcare workers, poultry workers and pig farmers can also get vaccination through arrangements by their residential care homes or work units.

Further to the above, community-living elderly persons aged 65 or above can get vaccination in General Out-patient Clinics of the HA and designated Elderly Health Centres of the DH starting from November 4.

In addition, under the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme (RVP), the subsidy for visiting medical officers will be increased from \$70 to \$100 per dose. Moreover, the DH will expand SIV to cover residents and healthcare workers in residential child care centres under the RVP.

In parallel, the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) 2019/20 commenced on October 9. Under the VSS, enrolled private doctors can provide subsidised vaccination to eligible groups in their clinics, or provide outreach vaccination service. The subsidy for SIV under the VSS is \$210 per dose for

all eligible groups.

At the same time, 2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) – Primary Schools will start on October 23. Meanwhile, 2019/20 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge) – Kindergartens/Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres/Child Care Centres (Pilot) has already started on October 9. The Government Outreach Teams or Public-Private-Partnership Teams will reach out to participating schools to provide free SIV to schoolchildren. So far, over 430 primary schools and 710 kindergartens/child care centres have respectively enrolled in the two outreach vaccination programmes.

For eligible children who will not receive SIV under school outreach vaccination, parents can arrange subsidised vaccination for their children in clinics of private doctors enrolled in the VSS.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. 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.

"Based on past epidemiological patterns, 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, members of the public are advised to receive SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza."

Meanwhile, free/subsidised pneumococcal vaccination (PV) for eligible persons will continue to be provided under the GVP and the VSS to prevent pneumococcal infections. Those aged 65 or above who do not have high-risk conditions will be eligible for one dose of 23-valent polysaccharide pneumococcal vaccination (23vPPV). Elderly persons with high-risk conditions who have not received PV before will be eligible for one dose of 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and one dose of 23vPPV one year later. The subsidy under the VSS will be \$250 per dose for 23vPPV and \$730 per dose for PCV13.

The public, especially eligible groups, may call the CHP's telephone line (2125 2125) for enquiries during office hours or visit the [vaccination schemes page](#) for more information.