

Further measures to push forward COVID-19 vaccination of government employees

To further encourage government employees to receive COVID-19 vaccination as early as possible so as to ensure that government bureaux and departments (B/Ds) have strong defense, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) announced today (November 9) that government employees eligible for receiving the third dose of COVID-19 vaccine will be offered a day of vaccination leave for their third dose.

At the same time, with the emergence of variant strains with high transmissibility, the Government will tighten the vaccination in lieu of regular testing (VRT) arrangement for all government employees. The testing requirements for government employees who have not received the first dose of a vaccine will be tightened from once every two weeks to once a week.

As for vaccination leave, all government employees (including civil servants, non-civil service contract staff and post-retirement service contract staff) who have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine on or before September 30 will benefit from the authorised absence arrangement. As the Government will implement third dose COVID-19 vaccination arrangements by phases, staff members should get vaccinated as soon as they can.

"After the Government's announcement on the arrangements for the third dose vaccination, some civil service unions and some colleagues who have received the vaccines earlier and belong to certain groups reflected to us that they hoped the Government can provide vaccination leave for the third dose of vaccine. As such, the Government will arrange vaccination leave for eligible government employees so that they can have sufficient time to recuperate after getting vaccinated," a spokesman for the CSB said.

"We notice that some chambers of commerce have indicated that they will provide vaccination leave arrangement for employees taking their third dose. We appeal to employers of other enterprises to offer similar arrangements as far as practicable."

"The Government will also tighten the VRT arrangement for all government employees. Those who have not received their first dose of a vaccine will be required to undergo polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 (PCR tests) using combined nasal and throat swabs at Community Testing Centres (CTCs) on a weekly basis."

Under the tightened arrangement, the results of PCR tests conducted from today (November 9) will be valid for a week only. For government employees who are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination due to medical conditions supported by a valid medical certificate, relevant B/Ds will continue to

allow these employees as far as possible to undergo weekly PCR tests at CTCs provided that departmental operations are not affected. B/Ds will continue to fund their tests on a reimbursement basis. Other government employees who have not received their first dose of a vaccine should take the weekly PCR tests outside working hours and pay for these tests at their own expense.

In other words, by November 22, all government employees who have not received their first dose of a vaccine will be subject to testing on a weekly basis.

"As the largest employer in Hong Kong, the Government will continue to promote vaccination at full throttle. The civil service plays an important role in the anti-epidemic effort. Whether in discharging their daily duties or in safeguarding the health of fellow colleagues or the people being served, it is the obligation of all civil servants to proactively receive vaccination unless there are medical reasons," the spokesman said.

Moreover, the Government will continue the current measures to facilitate government employees to receive vaccination, including allowing staff to receive vaccination during duty hours and favourably handling applications for sick leave or vacation leave when staff experience side effects arising from vaccination. The CSB has issued a guideline on the above arrangements to Heads of Departments. All departments will announce to their staff at the soonest opportunity details of the application procedures and relevant arrangements.