

Government adjusts COVID-19 vaccination requirements for inbound travellers

The Government announced today (October 26) that two COVID-19 vaccination requirements for inbound travellers will be adjusted from October 29. The two sets of requirements cover inbound travellers aged 12 to 17 who have received one dose of Comirnaty vaccine, and Hong Kong residents who have received one dose of recognised COVID-19 vaccine but are deemed unfit to receive the second dose because of health reasons.

COVID-19 vaccination requirements for persons aged 12 to 17

Under the adjusted requirements, inbound travellers aged 12 to 17 who have received one dose of Comirnaty vaccine at least 14 days ago are deemed to have complied with the requirements of completing the COVID-19 vaccination course under boarding and quarantine requirements.

In general, completing the vaccination course involves having received two doses of CoronaVac or Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days ago. The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health (JSC), joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP), announced earlier an interim recommendation regarding COVID-19 vaccination and recommended persons aged 12 to 17 to receive one dose of Comirnaty vaccine for the time being.

"JSC-EAP made the relevant interim recommendation after balancing the risk of the related side effect and benefit of Comirnaty vaccine in the local setting, having considered that myocarditis or pericarditis is a known side effect of Comirnaty vaccine which mainly occurs after the administration of the second dose in adolescents," a Government spokesman said.

From October 29, Hong Kong residents aged 12 to 17 who hold a recognised vaccination record (Note 1) of one dose of Comirnaty vaccine and have stayed in Group A specified places on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day are allowed to board flights for Hong Kong. On arrival at Hong Kong, they are still required to undergo 21-day compulsory quarantine in a designated quarantine hotel (DQH), with compulsory testing on the 26th day of arrival at Hong Kong.

If the relevant persons have stayed in Group B specified places on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 14 days before that day, they are required to undergo 14-day compulsory quarantine in a DQH and compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong.

If the relevant persons have only stayed in Group C specified places on the day of boarding for/arrival at Hong Kong or during the 14 days before that day, they are required to undergo seven-day compulsory quarantine in a DQH and compulsory testing on the ninth, 12th, 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong.

Arrangements for persons who are unfit to receive the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine because of health reasons

Separately, under the adjusted requirements, for Hong Kong residents who have received one dose of recognised COVID-19 vaccine (Note 2) and hold a recognised vaccination record (Note 1), they are exceptionally allowed to board for Hong Kong from Group A specified places if they were certified by a medical practitioner that they were unfit to receive the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine because of health reasons after receiving the first dose of vaccine.

In addition to other requirements applicable to Group A specified places, these inbound travellers from Group A specified places are required to present at boarding the aforementioned certificate issued by a medical practitioner who is registered in Hong Kong or at the place where the vaccine was administered. Upon arrival at Hong Kong, they are still required to undergo 21-day compulsory quarantine in a DQH and compulsory testing on the 26th day of arrival at Hong Kong.

As for the relevant persons who arrive at Hong Kong from Group B or Group C specified places, they have to undergo compulsory quarantine and compulsory testing in accordance with requirements applicable to non-fully-vaccinated persons. In other words, they have to undergo 21 or 14 days of compulsory quarantine in a DQH respectively, without any shortening of quarantine period.

For details on the boarding, quarantine and testing requirements for relevant specified places, please refer to www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/inbound-travel.html.

The spokesman reminded the public, "The epidemic situation overseas is different from that in the local setting, with COVID-19 incidence overseas remaining high. As such, completing the course of vaccination by receiving two doses of vaccine would provide more effective protection. Citizens who intend to travel overseas should also pay attention to the COVID-19 vaccination requirements of their destinations, including whether there is a requirement on receiving two doses of vaccine to complete the vaccination course."

The Government will gazette the relevant specifications under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation

(Cap. 599H) to effect the above measures.

Note 1: Recognised vaccination records include those issued by Hong Kong, Mainland or Macao authorities or an institution recognised by Mainland or Macao authorities, an authority or recognised institution of a country where its national regulatory authority is designated by the World Health Organization as a stringent regulatory authority, or a relevant authority or recognised institution of a country with which Hong Kong has reached a recognition agreement arrangement with its government.

Note 2: That is, vaccines listed under the "List of COVID-19 Vaccines Recognised for Specified Purposes"

(www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/list_of_recognised_covid19_vaccines.pdf).