

Government adjusts vaccination requirements of Vaccine Pass

The Government announced today (March 20) adjustments to the vaccination requirements of Vaccine Pass, with a view to further encouraging members of the public to get vaccinated as soon as possible, including the third dose, and aligning with the latest revised COVID-19 vaccination arrangement. The specific adjustments include: (1) advancing the implementation of stage three Vaccine Pass from end June to end May; (2) shortening the grace period for receiving the third dose after the second dose under Vaccine Pass; and (3) updating the vaccination requirements for persons previously infected with COVID-19 (recovered persons).

Advancing the implementation of stage three Vaccine Pass

The implementation of stage three Vaccine Pass will be advanced to start on May 31 instead of the original June 30. By that time, all applicable individuals in general (except certain special groups) under Vaccine Pass will need to have received the third dose. The relevant arrangement has taken into account the enthusiasm showed by members of the public in getting vaccinated since the start of the year, and that the Government has sufficient vaccine doses and vaccination capacity to get all eligible citizens of Hong Kong vaccinated with three doses before the deadline.

Shortening the grace period for receiving the third dose after the second dose

During the period of stage three Vaccine Pass (i.e. from May 31 onwards), the grace period for persons aged 12 or above (not recovered persons) to receive the third dose after the second dose will be shortened from the original nine months to six months. For those whose second dose was received within six months, their Vaccine Pass is still valid, but they must receive the third dose within six months after receiving the second dose (instead of the original nine months) in order to continue using the Vaccine Pass.

Updated vaccination requirements for recovered persons

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 (DH), joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel, updated the consensus interim recommendations on the vaccination arrangements for recovered persons on March 13 (see [separate press release](#)). Having regard to the experts' recommendations, the Government made the following updates to the vaccination requirements for recovered persons under Vaccine Pass (for details please refer to Annex):

(1) For recovered persons aged 12 or above, if they have received the second

or the third dose vaccine before infection, or are within six months after their recovery, there is no additional vaccination requirement under Vaccine Pass.

(2) For recovered persons aged 12 or above who recovered more than six months ago and did not receive any vaccine before infection, there is no change to the vaccination requirement during stage one (i.e. April 29 or before). In other words, they need to receive the first vaccine dose in order to use Vaccine Pass.

During stage two and stage three (i.e. from April 30 onward), the recovered persons can still use Vaccine Pass after recovery and within six months after receiving the first vaccine dose. If more than six months have passed, they would need to receive the second dose in order to continue using Vaccine Pass. The second dose vaccination requirement is not applicable to recovered persons aged 12 to 17 who received the Comirnaty vaccine as the first dose.

(3) For recovered persons aged 12 or above who recovered more than six months ago and received one dose of vaccine before infection, there is no additional vaccination requirement under Vaccine Pass during stage one (i.e. April 29 or before).

During stage two and stage three (i.e. from April 30 onwards), recovered persons who have recovered for more than six months need to receive the second dose to continue using Vaccine Pass. The second dose vaccination requirement is not applicable to recovered persons aged 12 to 17 who received the Comirnaty vaccine as the first dose.

The existing specified premises covered by the Vaccine Pass will remain unchanged. The Government is currently making relevant system enhancements, so that recovered persons with positive test results recorded in the Government's computer systems will be able to retrieve their recovery record QR code online at a later time. They can then also add their recovery status to their vaccination record QR code. The system is expected for launch in May and the Government will announce the details in due course. By then, recovered persons can present a vaccination record that meets the vaccination requirements or a valid recovery record QR code for entering specified premises subject to active checking of Vaccine Pass where the QR code needs to be scanned.

Before obtaining the relevant QR code, recovered persons can present the relevant proof of recovery or infection, such as discharge letter, SMS/electronic/paper record of positive nucleic acid test result issued by the Government or private laboratories recognised under the Laboratory Recognition Scheme of the DH, SMS/electronic record of completed declaration on DH's "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test", isolation order issued by the DH, and other recovery records issued by the Government or the Hospital Authority. Photograph showing a positive rapid antigen test result alone cannot serve as a valid recovery record. The person concerned should report the test result to the DH through the "Declaration System for individuals

tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test".

For individual recovered person holding a medical exemption certificate issued by a doctor, he or she can be exempted from the vaccination requirements of Vaccine Pass within the validity period of the medical exemption certificate. The DH will issue guidelines requiring doctors to make reference to relevant documentary proof before issuing medical exemption certificates to recovered persons.

Having regard to the above vaccination requirements under the consensus interim recommendations, the Government will make corresponding adjustments to the requirements under social distancing and inbound control measures, etc, and will announce the relevant details separately, including the relevant implementation and transitional arrangements.

"The current epidemic situation is still of grave concern. Both COVID-19 vaccines available in Hong Kong are safe and highly effective in protecting against severe disease and death from COVID-19 infection. We call on members of the public who are not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a much higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, to get vaccinated as early as possible for better self-protection. Members of the public who are currently eligible for a third dose should also get the dose as soon as possible," a Government spokesman said.