

Government appeals to all sectors of community to support seasonal influenza vaccination programmes

The Government today (October 21) appeals to all members of the public, especially priority groups, to timely receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV). The Government has made special arrangements to facilitate priority groups (including school children) to receive SIV through various SIV programmes.

Latest statistics on schools joining SIV programmes

The 2024/25 SIV Programmes started on September 26. At present, around 870 kindergartens and child care centres (80 per cent), 620 primary schools (93 per cent) and 400 secondary schools (79 per cent) have joined the SIV School Outreach Programme (SIVSOP). As of October 20, 2024, 380 schools have completed the first dose vaccination and more than 77 800 students have received SIV under School Outreach Programmes.

Flexible arrangements on SIV school outreach vaccination services in season 2024/25

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has been promoting SIV in schoolchildren, particularly young children in child-care centres and kindergartens, and optimising the vaccination programmes in response to the feedback from schools and parents.

To boost the SIV coverage rate among schoolchildren, special arrangements have been made under the SIVSOP this year to offer a more flexible choice of vaccine options for kindergartens and child-care centres. Kindergartens and child-care centres can choose to provide both injectable inactivated influenza vaccines (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccines (i.e. nasal vaccines) (LAIV) at the same or different outreach vaccination activities. Among the kindergartens and child-care centres participating in SIVSOP, 246 schools will offer LAIV, ten schools will offer both IIV and LAIV, and the rest will offer IIV. As a pilot scheme, LAIV is also provided to selected primary and secondary schools which indicated their preference for LAIV earlier this year. So far, two primary schools and four secondary schools have joined the pilot scheme. The Department of Health (DH) will continue to monitor and review the arrangement as appropriate.

Alternatively, schools can also invite doctors to arrange outreach service for injectable IIV and/or nasal LAIV at their campus under the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach.

Ongoing promotion of SIV uptake amongst school children

The DH has invited all schools in Hong Kong through the Education Bureau

(EDB) to participate in the SIVSOP. Upon commencement of the 2024/25 SIV Programmes, the DH has reached out to non-participating schools one by one to understand their difficulties, offer necessary assistance and facilitate them to participate in the programmes. The DH has also liaised with the EDB to issue appeal letters again to the School Heads Association of Kindergartens/Child-Care Centres to promote SIV uptake amongst young children. The CHP spokesman calls on those schools that have yet to join the outreach vaccination programmes to enrol as soon as possible to seize the optimum timing for vaccination and do their part to provide the best protection for schoolchildren.

Early childhood educators are also important points of contact with young school children and their parents. The DH has met a number of early childhood education and parent-teacher associations, as well as relevant medical associations to promote SIV among young children. The DH urges early childhood educators to join hands in appealing the parents to arrange for their children to participate in SIV, and at the same time to play their part in educating parents on the importance of vaccination to encourage more young school children to get vaccinated. With increased vaccination coverage, the protection of children could be strengthened and their risk of severe illness and death after contracting influenza could also be reduced.

"Surveillance data up to October 20 showed a total of 34 severe paediatric influenza-associated complication and death cases as recorded by the CHP this year, which is comparable with 41 cases in the pre-COVID-19 era in 2019. Among these 34 cases, 25 (74 per cent) did not receive influenza vaccine, illustrating the importance of SIV," a CHP spokesperson said.

A range of health education materials on influenza prevention (including webpage, press releases, pamphlets, and FAQs) has been produced by the DH and disseminated through various channels, especially those parenting media. The DH will continue to maintain close communication with stakeholders (including doctors, schools and other relevant Government Departments). For the latest information, please refer to the CHP's [influenza page](#) and [Vaccination Schemes page](#).