

Government officials encourage public to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (with photos)

A number of Government officials received seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) today (November 21) and appealed to the public to prepare for the winter influenza season by receiving vaccination.

Officials receiving vaccination today were the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong; the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung; the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip; the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Sonny Au; the Director of the Chief Executive's Office, Mr Chan Kwok-ki; the Under Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin; the Under Secretary for Food and Health, Dr Chui Tak-yi; the Under Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Joseph Chan; the Under Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Jack Chan; and the Under Secretary for Transport and Housing, Dr Raymond So.

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, was also present to show her support. She said, "Seasonal influenza can cause serious illnesses. Besides high-risk groups such as the elderly, children and immunocompromised patients, healthy people may also contract influenza and develop complications. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent influenza and therefore members of the public should receive vaccination early to protect themselves against influenza and its complications, hence reducing the risk of hospitalisation and death.

"To enhance the uptake rate among primary school children, the Department of Health has launched the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme this year to reach out to 184 primary schools and provide vaccination to their students through outreach teams. As of November 18, 2018, some 56 000 students have received vaccination under the Pilot Programme."

In addition, the coverage of the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) has been extended from Hong Kong people aged 65 or above to those aged 50 or above.

Professor Chan added, "As of November 18, 2018, some 218 000 doses of SIV had been administered via the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) and around 316 000 doses had been administered via the VSS. Along with the Pilot Programme, so far around 590 000 doses have been administered under various programmes launched by the Government, representing an increase of nearly 53 per cent from the same period in the 2017/18 season."

As it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body to prevent seasonal influenza viruses, the Government encourages people aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, to

receive vaccination early to avoid infection of influenza and its complications. Please refer to the webpage of the Centre for Health Protection (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html) for details of various vaccination programmes.

