

Government relaunches outreach vaccination service special programme for residential care homes

â€œTo enhance protection for the residents of residential care homes (RCHs) against COVID-19 and encourage timely COVID-19 vaccination so as to cope with the possible winter surge of respiratory tract infections including COVID-19, the Government announced today (August 23) that the outreach vaccination service special programme for residents in RCHs will be relaunched between August 26 and November 17. A special allowance will be provided to visiting doctors of RCHs participating in the special programme to encourage them to pay more visits to residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) to provide vaccination service to the residents.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) pointed out that the overall activity of COVID-19 has increased since June, with JN.1 and its descendant lineages remaining the predominant circulating strains. According to the latest surveillance data as of August 17, a total of 15 outbreaks in RCHEs and eight outbreaks in RCHDs (affecting 124 and 46 persons respectively) was recorded in the recent four weeks (between July 21 and August 17), which was more than that of the previous four weeks (between June 23 and July 20), when seven RCHE and three RCHD COVID-19 outbreaks (affecting 49 and 22 persons respectively) were recorded.

According to the recommendation by the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the CHP, high risk groups (including all persons aged 50 years or above and persons aged 18-49 years with chronic diseases) are recommended to receive a booster COVID-19 vaccination at least six months after the last dose or COVID-19 infection (whichever is later), regardless of the number of doses received previously. However, the percentage of RCHE residents who received a booster vaccination or recovered from COVID-19 infection in the past six and 12 months were about 30 per cent and 44 per cent respectively, while that of RCHD residents were about 27 per cent and 41 per cent respectively.

A CHP spokesman stressed that vaccination can effectively prevent serious cases. The CHP strongly appeals to high risk groups, particularly children, the elderly and chronic disease patients, to receive a COVID-19 booster as soon as possible. Hence, the Government will relaunch the outreach vaccination service special programme for RCHs. The new phase of the special programme will last for 12 weeks. Visiting doctors are invited to enhance visits to their responding RCHs and provide outreach vaccination service to the residents who are due for COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible. The Government will provide a special allowance to visiting doctors participating in the special programme to cover the additional manpower and transportation

costs arising from the programme.

The Government has conducted six phases of the outreach vaccination service special programme for RCHs. Under the concerted efforts of the RCH sector and visiting doctors, over 15 500 doses of COVID-19 vaccines were administered in the last phase between December 14, 2023, and March 6, 2024.

The Hospital Authority also continues to provide timely COVID-19 vaccinations to long-stay patients in their hospitals. The public may visit the CHP's [Vaccination Schemes page](#) and [COVID-19 Vaccination Programme website](#) for vaccination arrangements.