

Government to launch pilot scheme on vaccination service using BioNTech vaccine at certain private healthcare institutions

The Government announced today (November 30) that, starting next Monday (December 6), the Government will run a pilot scheme for members of the public to receive the BioNTech vaccine at private healthcare institutions, with a view to further facilitating and encouraging vaccination by broadening the vaccination network of the BioNTech vaccine and providing more channels for vaccination.

A list of the eight participating private healthcare institutions (as at November 29) and information on the vaccination venues, booking, enquiry hotlines and more are available at the thematic website of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/en/programme). Members of the public may make appointments with the relevant private healthcare institutions directly without going through the Government's website. As with the existing arrangement for COVID-19 vaccination, members of the public may receive the vaccine free of charge under the pilot scheme. Private healthcare institutions cannot charge members of the public for the COVID-19 vaccination service provided alone.

Private healthcare institutions participating in the pilot scheme have already gained extensive experience in providing large-scale COVID-19 vaccination service through their current involvement in the operation of Community Vaccination Centres. They are also competent in deploying medical staff and handling medical emergencies. The Government will provide a subsidy of \$160 per vaccine dose to these healthcare institutions. In line with the current arrangement for subsidies, those who provide vaccination service to elderly persons aged 60 or above will receive an additional subsidy of \$50 per dose. Reference has been made to the current Vaccination Subsidy Scheme of the Department of Health in determining the subsidy amount. The Government has also taken into account the services and support that need to be provided by the relevant healthcare institutions, including compliance with stringent cold chain requirements for vaccine storage and the dilution procedure of the vaccine, assessment prior to vaccination, and providing other support.

Furthermore, given that each vial of the BioNTech vaccine contains six doses and the storage time is limited once the vial is opened, the healthcare institutions will need to consolidate the vaccination appointments as far as practicable to avoid wastage of doses. The Government has also set out stringent arrangements to monitor the vaccine usage.

"Through the pilot scheme, the Government will study the feasibility of providing vaccination service using the BioNTech vaccine at more non-

government venues in the long term. With the experience gained from the pilot scheme, we will consider leveraging the service capacity, district networks and service flexibility of private healthcare institutions at the next stage of the Vaccination Programme to further facilitate and encourage vaccination among the public, while at the same time get prepared for the possible regularisation of COVID-19 vaccination in future," a Government spokesman said.

"The Government once again calls on persons 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 before the fifth wave strikes Hong Kong."