

# Hospital Authority commences influenza vaccination programme

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Public hospitals and out-patient clinics of the Hospital Authority (HA) will start providing seasonal influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations in phases to eligible persons on the coming Thursday (October 22) to dovetail with the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) for 2020/21.

The seasonal influenza vaccination programme this year will be carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the HA will provide influenza vaccination to eligible patients of public hospitals and out-patient clinics (see attachment for details). The second phase will commence on November 2 to cover community elders aged 65 or above.

The Chief Infection Control Officer of the HA, Dr Raymond Lai, appeals to members of the public to receive early vaccination to enhance immunity against influenza. "Similar to the rest of the world, fewer influenza cases were recorded in Hong Kong last year comparing to previous years. Infection risk of influenza will be higher with few people in the community with immunity. Public hospitals may not be able to cope with the upsurge of service demand resulting from the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and influenza at the same time. Also, it may increase the risk of cross-infection within in-patients in hospitals. According to overseas study, the mortality rate of COVID-19 is lower for those with flu vaccination. Study also shows patients infected with influenza and COVID-19 are likely to suffer from more serious clinical condition and their mortality rate tend to be higher."

Eligible patients with regular follow-up at Specialist Out-patient Clinics (SOPCs) or General Out-patient Clinics (GOPCs) are advised to receive vaccination at the time of their scheduled follow-up appointments within the vaccination period. Patients whose follow-up appointment dates fall outside the vaccination period could visit or call the respective clinics for necessary arrangements.

Poultry workers, pig farmers and people who are involved in poultry culling operations or the pig-slaughtering industry, as referred by relevant government departments, can also receive seasonal influenza vaccination in 22 designated GOPCs from November 9 onwards.

Regarding the arrangement for pneumococcal vaccination, the HA would dovetail with the GVP and provide pneumococcal vaccination to eligible public hospitals and clinic patients.

Eligible persons who wish to receive seasonal influenza and pneumococcal vaccinations should attend the SOPCs and GOPCs while bringing along relevant

documents. They will receive vaccinations if assessed as clinically suitable by clinical staff.

The HA spokesperson stressed that both the seasonal and pneumococcal vaccines are safe. Protection from seasonal influenza vaccination will develop in about two to four weeks after inoculation and last for at least six months. It is usually well tolerated apart from occasional soreness at the injection site. Some people may have fever, muscle and joint pains, and tiredness after vaccination. The signs will usually subside in one to two days. As for the pneumococcal vaccine, protection will be generated in two to three weeks after inoculation. Anyone having influenza symptoms, fever or severe illness should defer the vaccination until they have recovered.

Members of the public can enquire about the details of the GVP at the respective SOPCs or GOPCs where they are attending, or make enquiry at the HA hotline 2300 6555 during office hours or visit the following website: [www.ha.org.hk/goto/gvp202021/en/](http://www.ha.org.hk/goto/gvp202021/en/).

The HA has already started promoting the vaccination programme through different channels, including displays of notices at prominent places of public hospitals and out-patient clinics.