

Hospital Authority to commence 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 vaccination in phases to eligible persons from Wednesday (October 6) to dovetail with the Government Vaccination Programme 2021/22.

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). Eligible patients may visit the public hospitals and out-patient clinics under the HA (excluding 26 general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) currently providing COVID-19 vaccination service) for seasonal influenza vaccination.

Eligible patients with regular follow-up at specialist out-patient clinics (SOPCs) and GOPCs are advised to receive vaccination at the time of their scheduled follow-up appointments or they can call or visit the respective clinic for vaccination arrangements after the commencement of the vaccination programme. The HA spokesperson appealed to patients of the aforementioned 26 GOPCs to receive vaccination at the time of their scheduled follow-up appointments after the commencement of the second phase of the programme. Patients whose follow-up appointment dates fall outside the vaccination period can visit the respective clinics for necessary vaccination arrangements.

The second phase of the vaccination programme will commence on November 8 to cover the vaccination of community elderly people aged 65 or above at all GOPCs under the HA. 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 selected GOPCs.

The Chief Manager (Infection, Emergency and Contingency) of the HA, Dr Vivien Chuang, appealed to members of the public to receive early vaccination to enhance immunity against influenza. "The COVID-19 epidemic has not been subdued yet and, according to overseas studies, the mortality rate of COVID-19 is lower for those with flu vaccination. Studies have also shown patients infected with influenza and COVID-19 are likely to suffer from a more serious clinical condition and their mortality rate tends to be higher.

"The seasonal vaccines are very safe. Protection through 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 or swelling at the injection site. Some people may have fever, muscle and joint pain, and tiredness after vaccination. The

signs will usually subside in one or two days. Anyone with influenza symptoms, fever or severe illness should defer vaccination until they have recovered," she said.

Dr Chuang reminded the public that it is recommended to have an interval of at least 14 days between the administration of seasonal influenza vaccination and a COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty or CoronaVac).

Members of the public can enquire about the details of this year's seasonal influenza vaccination programme at the respective SOPCs or GOPCs they are attending, or make enquiries on the HA hotline 2300 6555 during office hours or visit the following website: www.ha.org.hk/goto/gvp202122/en. The HA has already started promoting the vaccination programme through different channels, including the display of notices at prominent places at public hospitals, SOPCs and GOPCs.