

Latest COVID-19 vaccination arrangements

In light of the supply of XBB mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong, the Government today (December 12) announced the latest vaccination arrangements of COVID-19 vaccine, with a view to providing better protection for high-risk priority groups and regularising the relevant vaccination arrangements gradually with COVID-19 being managed as a type of upper respiratory tract infections.

Following the arrival of a batch of 100 000 doses of XBB mRNA vaccines (Comirnaty Omicron XBB.1.5 30mcg/dose) in Hong Kong earlier, another batch of about 100 000 doses of XBB mRNA vaccines (Spikevax XBB.1.5 0.1 mg/mL) from another manufacturer will also arrive in Hong Kong soon. Scientific data shows that the efficacy and safety profile of the two vaccines are similar.

As [recommended by the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection \(CHP\) of the Department of Health \(DH\)](#), people belonging to the high-risk priority groups (i.e. persons aged 50 or above including the elderly living in residential care homes (RCHs), adults aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities, persons aged 6 months or above and with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers), regardless of the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses they received, can receive an additional COVID-19 vaccine booster for free with a dosing interval of at least six months after the last dose or recovery from COVID-19 infection. Those with higher risks, i.e. adult residents of RCHs and elderly aged 65 or above, would be accorded priority to receive the first batch of XBB mRNA vaccines.

First phase of vaccination arrangements

Starting from 9am on December 13, elderly aged 65 or above can make a booking through the Government online booking system at booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/index.jsp to receive XBB mRNA vaccine for completing their initial or booster dose on or after December 14 at Private Clinic COVID-19 Community Vaccination Stations or designated general outpatient clinics under the Hospital Authority (HA). Also, designated specialist outpatient clinics of the HA and designated Elderly Health Centres of the DH will also provide XBB mRNA vaccines to patients and members respectively starting from December 14.

With regard to the use of the two types of XBB mRNA vaccines (Comirnaty Omicron XBB.1.5 30mcg/dose and Spikevax XBB.1.5 0.1 mg/mL), the Government will base on the remaining shelf life to supply different types of XBB mRNA vaccines, which is in accordance with vaccination arrangements for general vaccines (e.g. seasonal influenza vaccines). Eligible persons may still choose to receive inactivated vaccines (CoronaVac/Sinovac). The Government

will also continue to provide vaccination for adult residents at RCHs for the elderly and RCHs for persons with disabilities through outreach services under the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme.

Second phase of vaccination arrangements

The second phase will be extended to cover other high-risk priority groups, including persons aged 50 to 64, adults aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities, persons aged 6 months or above and with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers. The Government will closely monitor the demand for XBB vaccines and launch the second phase at appropriate times.

As the local activity of COVID-19 may be higher in winter while a peak of seasonal influenza usually happens also in winter, experts strongly recommended members of the public, especially those high-risk individuals, to receive COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccination to guard against the possible COVID-19 upsurge and influenza season which may appear simultaneously. According to experts' views, all currently available COVID-19 vaccines (i.e. inactivated/mRNA ancestral strain/mRNA bivalent vaccines) are effective in preventing severe disease. Persons aged below 65 should receive any currently available COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible instead of waiting for the XBB vaccines.

A Government spokesman said, "The COVID-19 vaccines available in Hong Kong are all safe and effective, and fulfil quality requirements. The key to maintain the protection conferred by the vaccine is to receive suitable doses according to the vaccination schedule. As the protection conferred by the vaccines will diminish over time, the Government appeals to the members of the public who have not received a suitable number of doses of vaccine to get the dose(s) as soon as possible for self-protection, in particular high-risk persons such as the elderly and RCH residents."

Details of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme can be found at the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106934.html).