

Latest COVID-19 vaccination arrangements announced

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) said today (August 8) that the risk posed by COVID-19 still exists, and the COVID-19 activity in Hong Kong and neighbouring places has continued to increase. In view of the COVID-19 situation, the latest recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the opinions of local experts, the Government today announced updated COVID-19 vaccination arrangements under the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. The Government reminded members of the public to continue maintaining personal, hand and environmental hygiene, and reiterated that vaccination can effectively prevent serious cases.

The CHP pointed out that COVID-19 presents with rising waves roughly every four to six months in Hong Kong, and the latest overall activity has continued to increase since June. According to the latest surveillance data as of August 3, the percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for COVID-19 received by the CHP's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch rose to about 9.07 per cent, and the per capita viral load of SARS-CoV-2 virus from sewage surveillance had been over 400,000 copy/L for two consecutive weeks. The CHP expected that the local activity of COVID-19 may further increase. High-risk priority groups should get vaccinated as soon as possible and receive booster doses at appropriate times.

Arrangements for initial vaccination and booster vaccination in 2024/25

As the vast majority of the public had past COVID-19 infection, the arrangements for initial vaccination will be simplified, while the prevailing arrangements for booster vaccination will remain applicable. Eligible persons can continue to receive initial vaccination or booster vaccination for free. Relevant details are as follows:

1. Arrangements for initial vaccination starting from August 19

- persons aged 5 or above (regardless of their history of infection with COVID-19) are considered to have completed initial vaccination by receiving one dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine or two doses of inactivated vaccine, replacing the earlier three doses of initial vaccination; and
- persons aged 6 months to four years who have been infected with COVID-19 are considered to have completed initial vaccination by receiving one dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine or two doses of inactivated vaccine. For those who have not been infected, they should receive two or three doses of vaccines in accordance with recommendations of the vaccine manufacturers to be considered as having completed initial vaccination.

2. Arrangements for booster vaccination in 2024/25

- The following high-risk priority groups remain unchanged, and they can continue to receive booster doses for free in 2024/25 at least six

months after the last dose or COVID-19 infection (whichever is later), regardless of the number of doses received previously:

- older adults aged 50 or above, including those living in residential care homes;
- persons aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities;
- persons with immunocompromising conditions aged 6 months and above;
- pregnant women; and
- healthcare workers.

Starting from 9am on August 19, the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme booking system (booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/index.jsp) will accept bookings according to the updated vaccination arrangements. Eligible persons can make reservations through the online booking system for vaccinations at the COVID-19 vaccination venues. Persons who have made bookings before August 19 to receive initial vaccination can still receive COVID-19 vaccination according to the appointment date without being affected by the updated arrangements. The Government will continue to assist elderly people aged 60 or above living in the community to make COVID-19 vaccination bookings online, and the relevant arrangements are set out in an earlier [press release](#). Details of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme can be found on the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106934.html).

Supply of inactivated COVID-19 vaccines to be ceased

The existing inactivated COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong (i.e. Sinovac CoronaVac) will expire on October 3, 2024, and the vaccine supplier had confirmed that they will no longer produce the vaccines. Members of the public should take note and make a booking as soon as possible if they plan to receive vaccination with inactivated COVID-19 vaccines. Those who have never received COVID-19 vaccination and prefer to receive inactivated COVID-19 vaccines should receive their first dose within August this year to allow enough time (an interval of at least 28 days) before the second dose. Members of the public who have received inactivated vaccines before may choose mRNA vaccine to complete their initial vaccination or as booster.

Procurement of JN.1 lineage COVID-19 vaccines

In light of the earlier recommendation by the WHO and the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the CHP to use JN.1 lineage COVID-19 vaccines, the Government is exploring with the vaccine suppliers on the procurement of relevant vaccines, which are expected to be supplied for use in Hong Kong by the end of this year. The vaccination arrangements will be announced later.

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The CHP strongly urges members of the public, particularly children, the elderly and chronic disease patients, to receive vaccinations as early as possible for effective protection against COVID-19. Personal, hand and environmental hygiene should also be maintained at all times against respiratory tract infection including COVID-19. Symptomatic individuals, even if the symptoms are mild, should wear surgical masks and seek medical attention promptly to reduce the risk of spreading the virus to high-risk

persons.