

LCQ16: Persons recovered from coronavirus disease 2019 receiving vaccination

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Chung Kwok-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 26):

Question:

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic has been lingering on for over one year. So far, more than 11 000 people in Hong Kong have been confirmed to have contracted the disease, and most of them have recovered and been discharged from hospitals. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health has indicated earlier on that according to experts' opinion, immunity to the virus may usually last for at least six to nine months for persons who have recovered from COVID-19 (recovered patients), and they will be adequately protected by receiving only one dose of BioNTech vaccine at least 90 days after discharge or one dose of Sinovac vaccine six months after recovery, and they need not receive two doses of the vaccine as other members of the public do. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the respective up-to-date numbers of recovered patients who have received one dose and two doses of COVID-19 vaccine;

(2) whether any mechanism is in place under the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme to distinguish (including (i) at the time of members of the public booking an appointment and (ii) prior to their receiving a vaccine at a Community Vaccination Centre/designated clinic) recovered patients from other persons, and to inform recovered patients that they need to receive only one dose of vaccine after a specified date and they need not receive two doses of vaccine;

(3) whether it has studied the impacts of recovered patients receiving two doses of vaccine on their health (including the side effects and negative effects); whether it has assessed if it would be a waste of vaccines for recovered patients with antibodies to COVID-19 in their bodies to receive a second dose of vaccine; if it has, of the assessment outcome; and

(4) as some recovered patients who have received one dose of vaccine have pointed out that as their vaccination records do not show that they are recovered patients, they are regarded as not having completed the two-dose vaccination, whether it has studied if this situation will hinder recovered patients from enjoying the travel convenience to be offered under measures such as Air Travel Bubble or vaccine passports in future to those who have

completed vaccination; if it has, of the study outcome?

Reply:

President,

To safeguard public health and to allow the gradual resumption of normal operation of the society, the Government is implementing a territory-wide COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (the Vaccination Programme) free of charge and on a voluntary basis for all Hong Kong residents, including persons who have recovered from previous COVID-19 infection.

My consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by the Hon Chung Kwok-pan is as follows:

Currently, there are around 11 800 persons who have recovered from COVID-19 infection in Hong Kong. As at May 13, 2021, 1 472 recovered persons had completed the COVID-19 vaccination course (received at least the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine) after being discharged from hospital.

The two vaccines provided by the Government under the Vaccination Programme are respectively Comirnaty developed from the mRNA technology platform and the CoronaVac developed from the inactivated virus technology platform. According to the latest advice by the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (the Joint Scientific Committee) under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health and the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel, those previously infected with COVID-19 would be further protected by one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Recovered persons who wish to receive Comirnaty should wait for at least 90 days after discharge from previous infection. If they wish to receive CoronaVac, they should wait for at least 180 days after discharge from previous infection. After vaccination, recovered persons may experience more systemic side effects, such as fatigue, headache, chills, muscle pain, fever and joint pain, when compared to those without previous infection.

The Government announced on May 21, 2021 the arrangement of COVID-19 vaccinations for persons with previous COVID-19 infection. Under the relevant arrangement, the Government will notify via SMS messages those who have been discharged after recovery from previous COVID-19 infection and have not yet received any COVID-19 vaccine that they can receive a dose of COVID-19 vaccine at any Community Vaccination Centre (CVC) or private clinic enrolled under the Vaccination Programme. The Hospital Authority will also provide a customised factsheet on COVID-19 vaccination outlining the relevant vaccination arrangement to those recovered persons upon discharge from hospital. Those recovered persons can bring along the SMS message/factsheet concerned and go directly to any CVC or private doctor enrolled under the Vaccination Programme to make enquiries and arrange for vaccination following the recommended interval. No prior online booking via the online booking system for the Vaccination Programme is required.

As regards the various relaxations on social distancing measures under the concept of a "vaccine bubble", those recovered persons will be regarded to have completed the vaccination course 14 days after one dose of COVID-19 vaccination and a special arrangement will be made to reflect such a condition on their paper and electronic record of vaccination. Meanwhile, if the recovered persons have already received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine after discharge and have an appointment for the second dose, the Government will cancel the second-dose appointment for them. Recovered patients who have received one dose of vaccine can contact the service provider of their vaccination earlier to request to obtain the updated paper record of vaccination. Their electronic vaccine record will also be updated automatically.