

Minimum age for receiving CoronaVac vaccine lowered to 6 months

The Government announced today (August 2) that having regard to experts' advice, the Secretary for Health has approved the lowering of the minimum age for receiving the the CoronaVac vaccine from 3 years to 6 months old for "off-label use". Based on related clinical trials and studies of vaccination for local adolescents, the experts considered that three doses of CoronaVac vaccine (each dose of the same dosage as that for older children and adults) can be used for children aged 6 months to less than 3 years, following the same schedule of vaccination for older children. The Government already has the relevant vaccines in stock, and the vaccination arrangements will be announced.

For the Comirnaty vaccine, the experts also advised a three-dose series (each dose is one-tenth of that for an adult) to be administered to children aged 6 months to under 5 years. The Government is negotiating with the relevant drug manufacturer on the procurement of the designated paediatric formulation.

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel, issued the [consensus interim recommendations](#) yesterday (August 1) on the use of COVID-19 vaccines for children aged 6 months or above in Hong Kong.

A Government spokesman said, "According to research conducted by the University of Hong Kong, for children aged below 11 who need to be hospitalised after COVID-19 infection, the risks of admittance to a paediatric intensive care unit and death are 1.8 per cent and 0.2 per cent respectively. The risk of having neurological complications, including encephalitis, is as high as 15 per cent, which is twice of that for seasonal influenza. Other sequelae include 'multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children' and symptoms of 'long COVID', such as damage to the central nervous system, memory loss and insomnia. Recently, several cases involving young children suffering from severe illness or even death after COVID-19 infection were recorded. The situation is of grave concern. The Government attaches great importance to the vaccination for young children, and will strive to provide a wide range of vaccination channels for them to get vaccinated as quickly as possible, thus having early protection in the face of the threat posed by the highly transmissible mutant virus strains."