

Prevention and Control of Disease (Use of Vaccines) (Amendment) Regulation 2021 gazetted

The Government published in the Gazette today (October 15) the Prevention and Control of Disease (Use of Vaccines) (Amendment) Regulation 2021 (Amendment Regulation).

The Amendment Regulation extends the expiry date of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Use of Vaccines) Regulation (Cap. 599K) for one year from December 23, 2021, to December 23, 2022, enabling the Government to continue to authorise safe and efficacious COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use and implement the vaccination programme according to the mechanism provided by the existing regulation as a major tactic for fighting against the COVID-19 epidemic. The effective period of authorisation of the two COVID-19 vaccines (i.e. the Sinovac and Comirnaty vaccines) authorised for emergency use under the existing regulation will be extended accordingly.

The Amendment Regulation also provides immunity from civil liability, as now applicable to the Advisory Panel on COVID-19 Vaccines, to Government-appointed committees and another Government-appointed panel. Members of the committees and panel concerned will be given immunity from civil liability when they provide advice to the Government in good faith on the use of authorised vaccines for a specified purpose, or on clinical events following vaccination. The relevant committees and panel are:

- (a) the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation;
- (b) the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases;
- (c) the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases; and
- (d) the Chief Executive's Expert Advisory Panel.

The Amendment Regulation is made in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) (the Ordinance). Section 8 of the Ordinance empowers the Chief Executive in Council to make regulations for the purposes of preventing, combating or alleviating the effects of a public health emergency and protecting public health.

A Government spokesman said, "Vaccination has always been a key pillar of the Government's anti-epidemic work. As of October 14, over two-thirds of the eligible population had received their first vaccine dose. We will continue to proactively implement the vaccination programme and press ahead and encourage high-risk groups, in particular elderly people aged above 70, to get vaccinated, in order to protect them from serious complications and even death after infection, and at the same time build a protective shield in Hong Kong to defend against the COVID-19 virus being imported from places outside Hong Kong. Furthermore, we will make reference to local experts' advice and experience of other places, and plan for the next phase of the

vaccination programme and continue to discuss with drug manufacturers on procurement of vaccines."