

Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases issues recommendations on seasonal influenza vaccination for 2021-22 season in Hong Kong

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (May 12) issued the recommendations on seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) for the forthcoming 2021-22 influenza season in Hong Kong.

Seasonal influenza activity in Hong Kong remained at a low level after the end of the 2019-20 winter influenza season in mid-February 2020. The SCVPD noted that influenza transmission may have been altered by the range of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) in place for COVID-19 or travel restrictions or border closures. Influenza transmission could increase when the NPIs and travel restrictions are lifted, leading to potential co-circulation of influenza and SARS-CoV-2, with additional burdens on vulnerable populations and health systems.

The SCVPD also noted that there is increasing evidence suggesting that co-infection of COVID-19 and influenza increases morbidity and mortality, and influenza vaccination might reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation and the length of stay. As the risk groups of COVID-19 and influenza are similar, it is important to ensure that people who are at greater risk of influenza infection (e.g. health workers, older adults and pregnant women) are prioritised to receive SIV. Given that SIV offers protection against clinical influenza and severe cases do occur in previously healthy persons, all members of the public except those with known contraindications should receive SIV annually for personal protection.

Details of the SCVPD's recommendation are available on the CHP's website at www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/24008.html.