

Scientific Committees under CHP issue consensus interim recommendations on COVID-19 vaccination

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (JSC) convened a meeting today on September 15, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP), to discuss and issue consensus interim recommendations on COVID-19 vaccination, including the administration of a third dose of COVID-19 vaccines for persons who have been fully vaccinated and the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children and adolescents.

During the meeting, the JSC-EAP reviewed the latest scientific evidence and noted that the two currently used COVID-19 vaccines (i.e. Comirnaty and CoronaVac vaccines) are still very effective against severe disease in the majority of the population six months after completion of two doses. The current local coverage rate of COVID-19 vaccines is still suboptimal, especially for the older adults, in particular those who reside in residential care homes. Vaccination for this group of people remains the priority at the moment. They should receive the COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible, as long as they are not suffering from acute illnesses. There may be a need for additional dose(s) of vaccine in the future particularly for certain groups such as the immunocompromised and elderly population, or against the emergence of Variants of Concern (VOC).

The meeting also deliberated the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children and adolescents. Myopericarditis is a known side effect of the Comirnaty vaccine reported in both overseas and locally, with the majority occurred following the second dose in adolescents. To balance the risk and benefit in the local setting, JSC-EAP recommends persons aged 12 to 17 years to receive one dose of the Comirnaty vaccine, instead of two doses.

To minimise the potential side effects of the vaccine, the JSC-EAP recommends, as a precautionary principle, the option for intramuscular injection of the Comirnaty vaccine at mid-anterolateral thigh should be considered, especially for children and adolescents.

The JSC-EAP recommends the Hong Kong SAR Government to seek further confirmatory data from pharmaceutical company with a view to extend the use of CoronaVac vaccine to children and adolescents aged 12 to 17 years.

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