

Scientific Committees under CHP update consensus interim recommendations on use of COVID-19 vaccines

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (JSC) under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health convened a meeting today (October 11) to discuss and issue the updated consensus interim recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong.

Taking into account the latest recommendations by the World Health Organization, as well as the local situation of COVID-19, overseas practice and latest scientific evidence, the JSC updated its recommendations today.

Noting that the local activity of COVID-19 may be higher in winter, the JSC recommended a booster dose to be given at least six months after the last dose or COVID-19 infection (whichever is later), regardless of the number of doses received previously, for the following high-risk priority groups before a possible COVID-19 winter surge in the upcoming months for enhanced protection:

1. older adults aged 50 or above including those living in residential care homes;
2. persons aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities;
3. persons with immunocompromising conditions aged 6 months and above;
4. pregnant women; and
5. healthcare workers.

Also, as a peak of seasonal influenza usually happens during winter, experts also highly recommended members of the public, especially those high-risk individuals, to receive COVID-19 vaccination and seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) at the same time as soon as possible to guard against the possible COVID-19 upsurge and influenza season which may appear simultaneously.

The JSC recommended that any available vaccines (i.e. inactivated/mRNA ancestral strain vaccines or mRNA bivalent vaccine) should be used before the possible winter surge since they continue to provide benefit against severe disease. In this connection, the CHP urges citizens, in particular the high-risk groups, to receive COVID-19 vaccination as early as possible.

During the meeting, the use of new generation XBB mRNA vaccine was also discussed. Experts reviewed the latest epidemiology, scientific evidences of relevant vaccines and overseas vaccination practice, and considered that the XBB vaccine, when available in Hong Kong, could be used. In case of a limited local supply of the XBB vaccine, priority should be given to those with higher risks (e.g. elderly persons living at residential care homes).

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