

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

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 an online meeting, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP) yesterday (May 19), to discuss the use of a fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine in adults aged 18 to 59 years in Hong Kong. The updated consensus interim recommendations have been published today (May 20).

Having reviewed the latest scientific evidence and local situation, the JSC-EAP considered that the prevailing aim of COVID-19 vaccine strategy is to prevent severe disease and death due to COVID-19. Local data showed that three doses of Comirnaty vaccine or CoronaVac vaccine are highly effective against severe disease and death, and the protection is generally maintained at a high level over months.

The JSC-EAP considered a fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine in younger populations may provide transient additional protection against infection and symptomatic diseases. Uninfected individuals aged 18 to 59 years who are at higher risk of COVID-19 exposure (Note 1) or with personal needs (e.g. to study abroad or to fulfil a requirement for overseas travel etc.) may choose to receive a fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine at least six months from the third dose after considering the individual risk and benefit, and such an approach would also be applied for recovered adults in the same age group. On the other hand, the experts recommended last month a fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine for individuals aged 60 years or above as this group forms the majority of local fatal cases in the fifth wave of the COVID-19 epidemic.

The JSC-EAP reiterated the importance of building up immunity against severe disease and death due to COVID-19 in the general population by completing the recommended doses of COVID-19 vaccines to prevent forthcoming epidemic. The experts will continue to closely monitor any new scientific evidence to inform the use of further doses.

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

Note 1:

Higher risk of COVID-19 exposure includes:

- Workers in healthcare settings, residential care homes for the elderly or residential care homes for persons with disabilities;
- Workers at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational setting (personnel participating in anti-epidemic related work; personnel providing cross-boundary transportation or working at control

points and ports).