

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, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP), convened an online meeting today (August 1) to discuss and issue the consensus interim recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines for children down to six months of age in Hong Kong.

The JSC-EAP noted the early clinical trial data from three doses of Comirnaty vaccine and two doses of CoronaVac vaccine in children down to six months of age which showed that both vaccines were immunogenic and had no new safety concerns. Taking into account local context and in anticipation of the winter surge, vaccinating this group of children will likely prevent severe disease and death.

For Comirnaty vaccine, a three-dose series (each dose is one-tenth of the adult dose) may be administered to children aged six months to under five years of age. To reduce the small risk of myocarditis or pericarditis associated with mRNA vaccines, the first two doses are recommended to be given eight weeks apart, while the third doses should be given at least three months after receiving the second dose. While the specific paediatric formulation for six months to under five years of age is recommended, the JSC-EAP recommended the Government to explore the option of dilution of adult formulation to appropriate paediatric dosage in case this specific formulation cannot be made available within a short period of time.

For CoronaVac vaccine, based on related clinical trial data and local studies in adolescents, the experts considered three doses (each dose is the same dosage as in older children and adults) can be used for children aged six months to less than 3 years following the schedule of older children.

During the meeting, the JSC also reviewed the administration of the fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine in adult population. Noting that severe complications may also occur in those aged 50 to 59 years, JSC-EAP recommended a fourth dose of COVID-19 vaccine for those aged 50 years and above at least three months from the third dose, on par with the elderly population. JSC-EAP reaffirmed three doses of the CoronaVac and Comirnaty vaccine are highly effective in reducing hospitalisation, severe disease and death across all age groups in adult population and strongly urged completion of the recommended doses of COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible.

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