

Scientific Committees under CHP updated 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 a meeting tonight (February 25), joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP) to discuss and update the consensus interim recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong.

COVID-19 vaccines can protect individuals from severe illnesses and complications from COVID-19. Locally, fully vaccinated cases have much lower fatality rate than those not fully vaccinated. With that, JSC-EAP strongly recommended eligible persons who have not yet received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccines to get vaccinated, with priority accorded to those aged under 12 as well as those aged 60 and above.

The JSC-EAP also strongly recommended a third dose of Comirnaty vaccine for adults three months after they had received two doses of CoronaVac or Comirnaty vaccines. Meanwhile, priority should be accorded to persons aged 60 and above in view of their higher vulnerability to severe COVID-19 disease and higher fatality rate in the local context.

The use of COVID-19 vaccines in children was also reviewed during the meeting. For children and adolescents aged 5 to 17, the JSC-EAP recommended to shorten the time interval between the first two doses of Comirnaty vaccine from 12 weeks to eight weeks which should be given intramuscularly at the anterolateral aspect of mid-thigh.

The JSC-EAP recommended adolescents aged 12 to 17 who have received two doses of CoronaVac to receive a third dose of either CoronaVac or Comirnaty as soon as three months after the second dose. Adolescents who had received two doses of Comirnaty are recommended to receive a third dose of the same vaccine five months from the second dose, while CoronaVac should be made available as an alternative based on personal preference.

At the meeting, the experts also reviewed the use of COVID-19 vaccine for immunocompromised individuals. An additional dose (i.e. the fourth dose) of COVID-19 vaccine for immunocompromised patients aged 12 or above who have received three doses is strongly recommended for better protection. For immunocompromised persons below age 12, they are recommended to receive a total of three doses at this juncture.

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