

SFH appeals for public to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and seasonal flu to build up dual protection

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, attended the Tseung Kwan O community vaccination day today (October 19). Health talks and medical consultation were provided to residents of the district for them to learn more about COVID-19 vaccines and their protection.

The event was jointly organised by the Sai Kung District Office, the Wong Tai Sin and Sai Kung District Social Welfare Office of the Social Welfare Department, the Sai Kung District Health Centre Express, Haven of Hope Christian Service and the Sai Kung and Tseung Kwan O Community Anti-coronavirus Link. A total of eight health talks and medical consultation sessions were provided at Tseung Kwan O Public Library throughout the day for residents of the district.

Participants could receive the BioNTech vaccine at the Community Vaccination Centre at Tseung Kwan O Sports Centre right after the health talks. For those who opted for the Sinovac vaccine, staff on-site assisted them to make vaccination bookings or arranged for designated vehicles to transport them to clinics of private doctors who supported the event for vaccination.

Professor Chan said, "I am delighted to learn that some 300 residents took part in today's event. Currently, only less than 20 per cent of elderly people aged 80 or above have received COVID-19 vaccines. Senior citizens, persons with chronic diseases and other immunocompromised people face a high risk of deteriorating condition and even death once infected by COVID-19. Generally speaking, except for those with contraindications, the elderly and chronic disease patients should get vaccinated to protect themselves."

She also reminded members of the public on the importance of receiving seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV). "Evidence repeatedly indicates that a person who contracts influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and will have a higher risk of death. Receiving SIV can reduce the chance of hospitalisation and the length of stay. As such, receiving SIV and COVID-19 vaccination is equally important, in particular, for elderly people residing in the community or at residential care homes who should get vaccinated as soon as possible to build up dual protection," Professor Chan said.

The various SIV programmes for 2021/22 have commenced. The Government Vaccination Programme and the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme provide free and subsidised influenza vaccination for designated persons and eligible groups respectively. The recommended interval between administration of a seasonal

influenza vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine is at least 14 days.

"The Hospital Authority (HA) has set up COVID-19 Vaccination Stations in seven public hospitals to enable patients visiting hospitals for follow-up appointments and visitors, in particular patients of specialist out-patient clinics, to receive BioNTech vaccination without prior booking when they have their follow-up medical consultation. The seven hospitals are Queen Mary Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Tuen Mun Hospital, Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital, Tseung Kwan O Hospital, Caritas Medical Centre and Prince of Wales Hospital," she added.

Moreover, the Elderly Health Centres of the Department of Health, the HA and the District Health Centres also provide and continue to enhance COVID-19 vaccination services for elderly people with a view to providing them with one-stop vaccination services.