

## Hong Kong residents aged 60 or above (including eligible persons with disabilities) must use JoyYou Card to enjoy \$2 Scheme from August 25, 2024

The Government announced today (December 28) that, from August 25, 2024, all Hong Kong residents aged 60 or above must use a JoyYou Card to enjoy the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (\$2 Scheme). Existing Anonymous Elder Octopus and ordinary Personalised Octopus will cease to be applicable for the \$2 Scheme from that day. Eligible persons are invited to apply for a JoyYou Card as soon as possible. As for eligible persons with disabilities aged below 60, they can continue to enjoy the \$2 concessionary fare using the Personalised Octopus encoded with "Persons with Disabilities Status" and need not apply for a new card.

Eligible beneficiaries who have not yet applied for a JoyYou Card should submit their applications by post or via the Octopus App to Octopus Cards Limited (OCL). Members of the public may visit the JoyYou Card webpage ([www.octopus.com.hk/joyyou/en](http://www.octopus.com.hk/joyyou/en)) for videos illustrating steps for making an application and distribution points for paper application forms (with a postage-free return envelope). In general, OCL will send out a JoyYou Card to an eligible applicant within four weeks upon receipt of a duly completed application.

The Government will step up publicity to remind eligible persons to apply for a JoyYou Card as soon as possible, and make good use of district and service networks to provide facilitation and assistance to eligible persons with disabilities and elderly persons to make an application. Among them, 106 community support service units for persons with disabilities subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will distribute JoyYou Card promotional leaflets and application forms, handle enquiries and render assistance to members/persons with disabilities in their application. The SWD will also invite the self-help organisations of persons with disabilities/chronic illnesses under financial support scheme subsidised by the SWD to reach out to their members aged 60 or above through different channels, with a view to encouraging and assisting them to apply for a JoyYou Card. In addition, over 210 District Elderly Community Centres, Neighbourhood Elderly Centres and Social Centre for the Elderly subvented by the SWD will continue to distribute JoyYou Card paper application forms, while the 99 Day Care Centres/Units for the Elderly, 92 Home Care Services Teams and the residential care homes for the elderly will also render assistance to service users in need in their application.

The Government lowered the eligible age of the \$2 Scheme from 65 to 60 from February 27, 2022, and required Hong Kong residents aged 60 to 64 to use a JoyYou Card to enjoy the concessionary fare. A JoyYou Card carries a

personal photo and the name of the eligible beneficiary as proof of eligibility for enjoying the \$2 concessionary fare. Each eligible person will be issued with one card only. The Government then accepted JoyYou Card applications from Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above (born in 1956 or before) in batches from June 1, 2022, and some 1.25 million applications have been received to date.

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## **Expressions of interest invited for vacant school premises/school sites for international school development**

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (December 28) invited expressions of interest (EoI) for allocation of vacant school premises/school sites for international school development. The deadline is February 21, 2024.

The bureau has identified two vacant school premises/school sites in North Point and Kowloon Tong for possible international school development. The EoI exercise is open to all existing international school operators in Hong Kong and other interested parties which meet the relevant prescribed requirements.

An EDB spokesman said, "The Government is committed to developing a vibrant international school sector mainly to meet the demand for international school places from overseas families living in Hong Kong and families coming to Hong Kong for work or investment.

"The Chief Executive highlighted in the Policy Address 2023 the importance for Hong Kong to continue to trawl for talent and be proactive in competing for enterprises. The talent attraction initiatives have received a positive response since implementation. With an anticipated injection of talent through various talent admission schemes, we see the merit of conducting a School Allocation Exercise offering some 1 000 school places in meeting any surge in education needs of dependant children of incoming talent. Two vacant school premises/school sites are earmarked for the purpose.

"The EoI is the first step for us to ascertain the development needs of the international school sector and their interest in and development preference of the premises/sites identified. Subject to responses received through the EoI, we will proceed with the School Allocation Exercise in 2024. Interested operators who have responded to the EoI and have met the prescribed requirements will be invited to submit detailed proposals for consideration under an open and competitive bidding process."

In selecting the most appropriate school operators, the EDB will consider factors that include good organisational structure, proper management, sound financial footing, good track record, proven experience and expertise, and quality of the school proposal, including feasible measures to cater for the needs of target students, especially those from incoming families. Applicants are required to assess the potential demand for the curriculum they propose to offer and how the curriculum would meet the needs of their students.

Interested parties are reminded to read carefully the basic requirements and relevant instructions set out in the note to respondents before submitting the reply form. The note to respondents, detailed infrastructural requirements of the vacant school premises/school sites, and the reply form are available at the EDB website

([www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-premises-info/allocation-of-sch/sae\\_2023/eoi\\_sae2023.html](http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sch-premises-info/allocation-of-sch/sae_2023/eoi_sae2023.html)). The completed reply form should be submitted to the Infrastructure, International School and Statistics Division of the EDB on or before February 21, 2024, by post (6/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong) (the postmark date should not be later than the deadline) or by email ([iissd@edb.gov.hk](mailto:iissd@edb.gov.hk)).

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## **CFS announces risk assessment study results on polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in food**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (December 28) the results of a recently completed risk assessment study on polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in food. A total of 300 food samples were taken from the local market to estimate the dietary exposure to PAHs of the local adult population arising from consumption of these food items, and to assess the associated health risk. The study results showed that the current dietary exposure to PAHs is of low public health concern under usual consumption.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "PAHs constitute a large class of organic compounds containing two or more fused aromatic rings. They are primarily formed by incomplete combustion or pyrolysis of organic matter and during various industrial processes. PAHs can enter the food chain either through environmental contamination or by formation during food processing, such as drying and smoking; or cooking, such as grilling, roasting, barbecuing and baking. For non-smokers, the major route of exposure to PAHs is consumption of food."

Some PAHs have been shown to be genotoxic, carcinogenic,

immunosuppressive and affect development of experimental animals. The Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization Expert Committee on Food Additives considered in 2005 that 13 individual PAHs are clearly carcinogenic and genotoxic. Also, the International Agency for Research on Cancer has evaluated some PAHs and classified benzo[a]pyrene (BaP) as Group 1 (carcinogenic to human), while several PAHs were classified as Group 2A (probably carcinogenic to humans), or Group 2B (possibly carcinogenic to humans).

The CFS collected a total of 300 food samples including cereal and cereal products, meat and poultry, oils and fats, and spices for testing the occurrence of 16 European Union (EU) priority PAHs in food. Among all samples collected, the levels of total PAHs ranged from not detected to 120 microgram/kilogram. Regarding PAHs in different food groups, spices contained the highest mean level, followed by meat and poultry and oils and fats. Combining the food consumption data captured from the Second Hong Kong Population-based Food Consumption Survey, the food group cereal and cereal products is the major contributor to the dietary exposure to PAHs for the local adult population.

It is noted that BaP is of more concern among various PAHs, and PAH4 is often used as indicator of the occurrence of the EU priority PAHs. In this study, the calculated margin of exposure values for both BaP and PAH4 are above 10 000, which indicates that the current dietary exposure to PAHs for the Hong Kong adult population is of low health concern.

The spokesman said that comparing the results of the current study with that of the other places, the dietary exposure to PAHs of the local adult population is low. Based on the results of the study, changes to the basic dietary advice on healthy eating are not justified. However, members of the public are advised to maintain a balanced and varied diet to avoid excessive exposure to any contaminants, including PAHs, from a small range of food items.

Moreover, the spokesman reminded the food trade to take measures to minimise introduction of PAHs in their food products during processing by making reference to the relevant code of practice adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission in 2009 in accordance with the principle of as low as reasonably achievable.

The risk assessment study is now available on the CFS website ([www.cfs.gov.hk](http://www.cfs.gov.hk)).

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## **Eligibility of Colorectal Cancer**

# Screening Programme updated

The Department of Health (DH) announced today (December 28) that Hong Kong residents born in the years between 1948 and 1974 are eligible to enrol in the Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme (CRCSP) from January 1, 2024.

Under the CRCSP, asymptomatic Hong Kong residents aged between 50 and 75 are subsidised to undergo screening tests every two years in the private sector for prevention of colorectal cancer. The years of birth of eligible persons are updated at the beginning of each year.

Participants in the CRCSP should attend a medical consultation provided by an enrolled primary care doctor (PCD) and receive a Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) screening arranged by the PCD. If the FIT result is positive, the participant will be referred to an enrolled colonoscopy specialist to receive a colonoscopy examination subsidised by the Government. If the FIT result is negative, the participant is advised to repeat the screening two years later.

Since the launch of CRCSP in 2016, around 420 000 eligible persons have participated in the programme. As of end-November this year, among participants who had submitted FIT tube samples with analysable results, a cumulative total of about 62 900 persons (16.2 per cent) had positive results. Among those FIT-positive participants who underwent a colonoscopy examination, about 32 500 persons (60.8 per cent) had colorectal adenomas and around 2 900 persons (5.4 per cent) had colorectal cancer.

Among the approximately 2 900 colorectal cancer cases diagnosed under the CRCSP, a preliminary analysis of 1 900 cases also revealed that about 57 per cent of these cases belonged to earlier stages, thus having a more favourable prognosis.

A spokesman for the DH reiterated that screenings can identify people who have colorectal cancer before they present with symptoms, or those with higher risk of colorectal cancer, and enable them to receive early treatment, thus significantly improving the prognosis. With colorectal adenoma removed in the course of a colonoscopy, these lesions are also prevented from turning into cancer.

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cancer locally. In 2021, there were 5 899 newly diagnosed colorectal cancer cases. Colorectal cancer is also the second most common cause of cancer death in Hong Kong. In 2022, colorectal cancer led to 2 270 deaths.

There is no quota for participants under the CRCSP and it is heavily subsidised by the Government. A government subsidy of \$280 per consultation by a PCD applies, including the second consultation to follow up on a positive FIT test result. Under the standard colonoscopy service package targeted at FIT-positive participants, the subsidy amount is \$8,500 if polyp removal is necessary, whereas the amount is \$7,800 if no polyp removal is

needed. Colonoscopy specialists may charge a co-payment not exceeding \$1,000 when providing the standard colonoscopy examination service.

Currently, more than 1 030 PCDs have successfully enrolled in the CRCSP covering about 1 930 locations, and about 97 per cent of these locations will not charge any additional payment for the screening.

More than 240 colonoscopy specialists have also joined the CRCSP to provide colonoscopy examination services at about 770 service locations, and over 70 per cent of these locations will not charge any additional payment for the colonoscopy and polyp removal if necessary.

The spokesman called on eligible persons to join the CRCSP starting from the age of 50 and prevent colorectal cancer by leading a healthy lifestyle including exercising regularly, eating two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables daily, maintaining a healthy body weight, and saying no to smoking and alcohol. Participants with negative FIT results are advised to receive FIT re-screening after two years to maximise the health benefit. Participants are also encouraged to bring along eligible relatives and friends to join the CRCSP.

Eligible persons who are interested to join the CRCSP should enrol in the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS). Please refer to the eHRSS website at [www.ehealth.gov.hk](http://www.ehealth.gov.hk) or call the Registration Office at 3467 6300 for details.

For more information on the CRCSP, please visit the DH's thematic website [www.colonscreen.gov.hk](http://www.colonscreen.gov.hk) or call the dedicated hotline (3565 6288) during office hours.

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## [Red flag hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach](#)

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 28) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.