

Latest COVID-19 vaccination arrangements

In light of the supply of XBB mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong, the Government today (December 12) announced the latest vaccination arrangements of COVID-19 vaccine, with a view to providing better protection for high-risk priority groups and regularising the relevant vaccination arrangements gradually with COVID-19 being managed as a type of upper respiratory tract infections.

Following the arrival of a batch of 100 000 doses of XBB mRNA vaccines (Comirnaty Omicron XBB.1.5 30mcg/dose) in Hong Kong earlier, another batch of about 100 000 doses of XBB mRNA vaccines (Spikevax XBB.1.5 0.1 mg/mL) from another manufacturer will also arrive in Hong Kong soon. Scientific data shows that the efficacy and safety profile of the two vaccines are similar.

As [recommended by the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection \(CHP\) of the Department of Health \(DH\)](#), people belonging to the high-risk priority groups (i.e. persons aged 50 or above including the elderly living in residential care homes (RCHs), adults aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities, persons aged 6 months or above and with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers), regardless of the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses they received, can receive an additional COVID-19 vaccine booster for free with a dosing interval of at least six months after the last dose or recovery from COVID-19 infection. Those with higher risks, i.e. adult residents of RCHs and elderly aged 65 or above, would be accorded priority to receive the first batch of XBB mRNA vaccines.

First phase of vaccination arrangements

Starting from 9am on December 13, elderly aged 65 or above can make a booking through the Government online booking system at booking.covidvaccine.gov.hk/forms/index.jsp to receive XBB mRNA vaccine for completing their initial or booster dose on or after December 14 at Private Clinic COVID-19 Community Vaccination Stations or designated general outpatient clinics under the Hospital Authority (HA). Also, designated specialist outpatient clinics of the HA and designated Elderly Health Centres of the DH will also provide XBB mRNA vaccines to patients and members respectively starting from December 14.

With regard to the use of the two types of XBB mRNA vaccines (Comirnaty Omicron XBB.1.5 30mcg/dose and Spikevax XBB.1.5 0.1 mg/mL), the Government will base on the remaining shelf life to supply different types of XBB mRNA vaccines, which is in accordance with vaccination arrangements for general vaccines (e.g. seasonal influenza vaccines). Eligible persons may still choose to receive inactivated vaccines (CoronaVac/Sinovac). The Government

will also continue to provide vaccination for adult residents at RCHs for the elderly and RCHs for persons with disabilities through outreach services under the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme.

Second phase of vaccination arrangements

The second phase will be extended to cover other high-risk priority groups, including persons aged 50 to 64, adults aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities, persons aged 6 months or above and with immunocompromising conditions, pregnant women and healthcare workers. The Government will closely monitor the demand for XBB vaccines and launch the second phase at appropriate times.

As the local activity of COVID-19 may be higher in winter while a peak of seasonal influenza usually happens also in winter, experts strongly recommended members of the public, especially those high-risk individuals, to receive COVID-19 and seasonal influenza vaccination to guard against the possible COVID-19 upsurge and influenza season which may appear simultaneously. According to experts' views, all currently available COVID-19 vaccines (i.e. inactivated/mRNA ancestral strain/mRNA bivalent vaccines) are effective in preventing severe disease. Persons aged below 65 should receive any currently available COVID-19 vaccines as soon as possible instead of waiting for the XBB vaccines.

A Government spokesman said, "The COVID-19 vaccines available in Hong Kong are all safe and effective, and fulfil quality requirements. The key to maintain the protection conferred by the vaccine is to receive suitable doses according to the vaccination schedule. As the protection conferred by the vaccines will diminish over time, the Government appeals to the members of the public who have not received a suitable number of doses of vaccine to get the dose(s) as soon as possible for self-protection, in particular high-risk persons such as the elderly and RCH residents."

Details of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme can be found at the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/106934.html).

Labour Department to hold occupational health public talks

The Labour Department (LD) will hold a public talk entitled "Manual Handling Operations and Prevention of Back Injuries" on December 20 (Wednesday). The talk will introduce the structure and functions of the back, causes and preventive measures of back injuries, and proper manual handling operations, with demonstrations and practice of workplace exercises.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational hygienist and occupational health nurse at 3.30pm at the Lecture Theatre of the Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

The LD will hold another talk, entitled "Work & Healthy Lifestyle" on December 29 (Friday). The talk will introduce a balanced diet, regular exercise, sufficient rest and stress management to encourage employees to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Demonstrations and practice of workplace exercises will also be included.

The talk will be given by the occupational health nurse at 3.30pm at the Lecture Hall of the Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

Both talks will be given in Cantonese. Admission is free but pre-registration is required. Interested participants can register online (www.oshsreg.gov.hk). For enquiries, please call 2852 4040.

Missing boy in Tseung Kwan O located

A boy who went missing in Tseung Kwan O has been located.

Zhang Tsz-hon, aged 16, went missing after he left his residence on King Ling Road on December 9 morning. His family made a report to Police on the next day (December 10).

The boy was located on Castle Peak Road – Yuen Long last night (December 11). He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

HKMA organises Green and Sustainable Banking Conference and announces results of Green Fintech Competition (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) organised the Green and Sustainable Banking Conference today (December 11). The event brought together around 400 participants from banks, technology firms, regulatory authorities and the academia.

In his opening remarks, the Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Arthur Yuen, highlighted that everyone must act fast in the transition to net-zero and banks play a central role in achieving climate goals.

"But action must be guided by knowledge," Mr Yuen said.

"Banks need to build up knowledge about the latest technologies that support the transition to net-zero before they can effectively channel capital to support transition efforts. The HKMA will enable change through strengthening the green finance ecosystem and supporting banks' financing of the transition," he added.

A key objective of the conference is to provide a platform for the banking sector and the technology sector to discuss the role of low-carbon technology and green fintech in the net-zero transition in Hong Kong and the Mainland. The panel sessions discussed how different types of low-carbon technologies, such as hydrogen energy, carbon capture, utilisation and storage, and smart energy management systems, can contribute to the net-zero transition and how the Hong Kong banking sector can assist in scaling up the application of those technologies through their lending and investment decisions.

The conference concluded with the Award Presentation Ceremony of the [Green Fintech Competition](#). The Competition was launched in September 2023 to seek market-ready solutions that can help the banking sector address challenges under the following themes: Net-zero Transition or Transition Planning; Climate Risk Management; Green and Sustainable Finance; and Sustainability or Climate-related Disclosure and Reporting. More than 85 submissions from around 70 companies were received. The winner and a selected finalist of each theme showcased their solutions at an exhibition area at the conference, which included blockchain-based systems for ESG data reporting and analysis and AI-powered tools for physical risk assessment. Please refer to the Annex for the winners and first runners-up of the competition.





[Hong Kong Customs detects dangerous drugs internal concealment case involving passenger at airport \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (December 10) detected a dangerous drugs internal concealment case involving an incoming passenger at Hong Kong International Airport and seized about 1.1 kilograms of suspected cocaine with an estimated market value of about \$1.2 million.

A male passenger, aged 41, arrived in Hong Kong from Lagos, Nigeria, via Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, yesterday. During Customs clearance, Customs officers found him to be suspicious and suspected that he had dangerous drugs concealed inside his body cavity. He was then escorted to the hospital for examination.

Upon examination, the man was confirmed by a medical officer to have foreign objects concealed inside his body cavity. He was arrested immediately. As at 5pm today (December 11), the arrested man has discharged 59 pellets of suspected cocaine weighing about 1.1kg in total.

An investigation is ongoing.

Following the resumption of normal travel and exchanges with the Mainland and other parts of the world, the number of visitors to Hong Kong has also been increasing steadily. Customs will continue to apply a risk

assessment approach and focus on selecting passengers from high-risk regions for clearance to combat transnational drug trafficking activities.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance, trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).

