

Vaccination of nasal spray live attenuated influenza vaccines expanded under special arrangement

In view of the keen demand for seasonal influenza vaccines (SIV) by members of the public and the tight supply of SIV around the world, following the earlier arrangement to increase overall supply and allocation arrangement for SIV, the Government announced today (December 18) an one-off special arrangement to make available unallocated nasal spray live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) to Hong Kong residents that are not among the high risk groups for influenza but are suitable for receiving the vaccines.

With the winter surge approaching and the COVID-19 epidemic remains severe, the Government decides to put in place an one-off special arrangement, after reviewing the overall supply and allocation arrangement for SIV, as well as the usage of LAIV, to allow Hong Kong residents aged between two and 49 (save for those who are pregnant, have low immunity or have contraindications which rendered them not suitable for LAIV) to have access to LAIV provided by the Government.

Hong Kong residents who wish to receive LAIV may from December 22 receive LAIV via private doctors/clinics participating in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) and the above-mentioned special arrangement (including private doctors/clinics coordinated by the Home Affairs Department) on a first-come-first-served basis. LAIV will be provided while stocks last. Those who wish to receive vaccination are recommended to make appointment with the clinics concerned.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said, "The suspension of face-to-face classes has led to a number of vaccination activities being cancelled under the '2020/21 SIV School Outreach (Free of Charge)' programme. The recent wave of epidemic may also affect the vaccination plans for members of the public and thus a limited quantity of LAIV remains available. Compared to quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccines, LAIV has more restrictions in administration of vaccines with a shorter shelf-life. The special arrangement aims to encourage more members of the public to receive vaccination and to reduce wastage."

Persons under eligible groups of VSS (see note) who are suitable in receiving LAIV would continue to receive free vaccination under the special arrangement. The subsidy of \$100 per dose will be provided to the doctor for provision of vaccination services. For other Hong Kong residents receiving LAIV under the special arrangement, the private doctors will not receive additional subsidy from the Government, but should undertake not to collect more than \$100 from the vaccinated person.

Private doctors / clinics who have been allocated additional vaccines from the Government under the allocation exercise announced on October 22 may

provide LAIV to members of the public from December 22 in accordance with the special arrangement and relevant conditions. Separate application is not required. The Department of Health will separately contact relevant private doctors/clinics on the details of the special arrangement.

Influenza viruses and the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 may both spread in the coming winter influenza season. A person contracting influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill. Receiving an influenza vaccine early during 2020/21 is therefore important. Eligible high-risk groups under the VSS could continue to receive free quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine under the arrangement announced earlier. Private doctors/clinics should expedite the delivery and collection of the ordered SIV for early vaccination for members of the public.

The Government announced on October 22 the vaccine allocation exercise which allocates an addition of around 100 000 doses of vaccines, including quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine and LAIV, to doctors who have enrolled in the 2020/21 SIV School Outreach (Free of Charge) and are not able to procure sufficient vaccines for students, doctors who have enrolled in the VSS and non-governmental organisations / private doctors / clinics enrolled in the VSS coordinated by the Home Affairs Department.

The list of clinics participating in the allocation exercise and providing LAIV is at www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/list_vssdr_gov_laiv_eng.pdf. Members of the public can check with the clinic direct about the vaccination arrangement. Details of Government's vaccination programmes/scheme, including the VSS, are available on www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html.

Note: Eligible groups aged between two and 49 years can continue to receive free LAIV from private doctors enrolled in the VSS:

- Children aged between 2 years and below 12 years, or children aged 12 years or above who are studying at a primary school in Hong Kong; or
- Persons with intellectual disabilities; or
- Persons receiving Disability Allowance; or
- Persons who are recipients of the standard rate of "100% disabled" or "requiring constant attendance" under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.