

Vaccination Subsidy Scheme 2020/21 to start this Thursday

With the launch of the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) 2020/21 this Thursday (October 8), the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (October 5) reminded eligible persons to receive a subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) in a timely manner to better protect themselves in the winter influenza season.

The eligible groups are Hong Kong residents who are:

- Persons aged 50 years or above;
- Children aged 6 months to under 12 years (or primary school students);
- Pregnant women;
- Persons with intellectual disabilities;
- Persons receiving Disability Allowance; or
- Persons who are recipients of the standard rate of "100% disabled" or "requiring constant attendance" under Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.

Eligible groups can receive a subsidised influenza vaccination from enrolled private doctors in their clinics. The Government's subsidy for an SIV under the VSS is increased from \$210 to \$240 per dose for all eligible groups. Enrolled doctors' clinics may charge an extra fee while currently around 40 per cent of clinics do not charge an extra fee. Enrolled doctors will display the VSS logo near the entrance of their clinics and a pricing poster in the clinic showing their charges. The list of enrolled doctors and their service fees after deducting the government subsidy has been uploaded to the eHealth System (Subsidies) (apps.hcv.gov.hk/Public/en/SPS/Search).

In addition, under the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge), the Government will arrange a Public-Private-Partnership or a Government Outreach Team to provide free vaccinations for schoolchildren in participating schools. The outreach service for kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres will start on October 8 while the service for primary schools will begin on October 22. For eligible children who will not receive an SIV in school outreach vaccination activities, parents can still arrange a subsidised vaccination for their children in clinics of private doctors enrolled in the VSS.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Influenza can cause serious illnesses in high-risk individuals and even healthy persons. Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective, all persons aged 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, are recommended to receive an SIV for personal protection. Based on past epidemiological patterns, the winter influenza season usually starts in January. However, the exact time of arrival cannot be predicted. As it takes about two weeks to develop antibodies, members of the public are advised to receive an SIV early for protection against seasonal influenza."

The CHP also reminds the public that influenza viruses and the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 will possibly both spread in the coming winter influenza season. A person getting influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill. Getting an influenza vaccine during 2020/21 is therefore important.

Meanwhile, a subsidised pneumococcal vaccination (PV) for eligible elderly persons aged 65 or above will continue to be provided under the VSS to prevent pneumococcal infections. Eligible elderly persons who do not have high-risk conditions and have not received a PV before will be eligible for one dose of 23-valent polysaccharide pneumococcal vaccination (23vPPV), whereas those with high-risk conditions who have not received a PV before will be eligible for one dose of 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) and one dose of 23vPPV one year later. The subsidy is increased to \$300 per dose of 23vPPV and \$760 per dose of PCV13.

The public may call the CHP's telephone number (2125 2125) or visit the CHP's Vaccination Schemes page for more details.