

CE and Principal Officials appeal to public to receive seasonal influenza vaccination early (with photos)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, led Principal Officials and Under Secretaries to receive seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) today (October 28) and appealed to the public to receive seasonal influenza vaccination early and to maintain good personal and environmental hygiene with a view to making preparations for the winter surge of influenza.

Mrs Lam said, "With the COVID-19 pandemic and the approaching winter surge of influenza, coinfection of influenza and COVID-19 may possibly cause more severe conditions. SIV is one of the effective means to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, as well as to reduce the risk of influenza-related hospitalisation and death. In view of this, I appeal to the high-risk groups in particular to receive free SIV early in the public healthcare system through the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) in order to enhance personal protection."

In view of the keen demand for SIV by members of the public recently, the Government announced last Thursday (October 22) the latest arrangement to increase the overall supply of SIV and the allocation arrangement of SIV, including provision of an additional 100 000 doses of SIV in phases to the Public-Private-Partnership Teams that provide vaccination for schoolchildren and doctors enrolled in the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) so as to encourage eligible high-risk persons to receive SIV as early as practicable, and to help relieve the tight supply in the private healthcare sector.

The Government strives to increase the SIV coverage rate among different groups and continues to allocate additional resources for various vaccination programmes so as to achieve the aim of prevention and control of diseases. The eligible groups of the VSS were extended in 2018/19 to cover persons aged between 50 and 64. In order to enhance the uptake rate among schoolchildren, the Government has regularised the School Outreach Vaccination Pilot Programme for primary schools in 2019/20 and the Pilot Programme for kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres in 2020/21 to cover more primary schools, kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres. The Government also actively co-ordinates with schools and private doctors to organise outreach SIV activities in schools.

The new additional eligible group under this year's GVP and VSS covers persons receiving the standard rate of "100% disabled" or "requiring constant attendance" under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme.

The Government continues to provide free or subsidised SIV for eligible groups in 2020/21, including children aged 6 months to under 12 years,

persons aged 50 or above, pregnant women, people with intellectual disabilities and persons receiving Disability Allowance, under the GVP, the VSS and the Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of Charge). Various vaccination schemes have been launched. Details are available at the website of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health: www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html.

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 influenza vaccination for personal protection. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against seasonal influenza viruses, the Government appeals to the public to receive vaccination early so as to prevent getting infected with influenza and its complications.

