

DH calls for influenza vaccination as influenza activity increases in Hong Kong and northern hemisphere

â€‹The Controller of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health, Dr Edwin Tsui, today (February 3) reminded members of the public that the seasonal influenza activity in Hong Kong and many other countries and regions in the northern hemisphere remains at a high level. All sectors of the community should heighten their vigilance and enhance personal protection measures against influenza, including receiving seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) to protect their health and that of their family members. Those who plan to travel should stay alert to the situation of infectious diseases in their destinations, and observe strict personal and environmental hygiene.

"Hong Kong entered the influenza season in early January. The CHP has recorded 199 adult cases of intensive care unit admissions or deaths due to influenza in the first four weeks, as compared with 127 cases in the same period in the last influenza season. Among them, there were 122 deaths and over 70 per cent of these severe or death cases did not receive SIV. For the deaths, nearly 90 per cent involved persons aged 65 or above. For children, the CHP has recorded nine cases of severe paediatric influenza-associated complications. Seven of them were unvaccinated," he said.

Dr Tsui said that as the influenza activity in many parts of the northern hemisphere (including the Mainland, Japan, Korea, as well as Europe and North America) remains at a high level, people who are going to travel should pay attention to the influenza situation at their destinations before departure and take appropriate personal protective measures, including receiving SIV as soon as possible and consider wearing a surgical mask when staying in crowded places. Regardless of whether in Hong Kong or abroad, if people develop respiratory symptoms, even if mild, they should wear surgical masks and seek medical advice promptly.

"With reference to previous surveillance data, virus activity will continue to increase for a period of time after the start of the influenza season before peaking. Currently available data indicate that the influenza activity level is still on the rise. In view of the high levels of influenza activity locally and in the northern hemisphere in the coming weeks, all persons aged 6 months and above (except those with known contraindications) who have not yet received SIV, particularly the elderly and children who have a higher risk of becoming infected with influenza and developing complications, should act immediately to minimise the risk of serious complications and death after infection," Dr Tsui said.

As of February 2, a total of about 1 932 000 doses of vaccines were administered under the various vaccination programmes, representing an

increase of about 6.4 per cent over the same period last year and an all time high, surpassing the total number of doses administered under the various vaccination programmes in year 2023/24 (i.e. about 1 873 000 doses). The number of schools participating in the SIV School Outreach has also increased significantly this year. About 1 030 kindergartens/child care centres (98 per cent), about 640 primary schools (98 per cent) and about 490 secondary schools (98 per cent) have completed or are arranging the SIV school outreach activities. This is higher than last year's participation rate (80 per cent of kindergartens/child care centres, 95 per cent of primary schools and 70 per cent of secondary schools). The SIV coverage rate for children aged 6 months to under 2 years remained relatively low at about 21.0 per cent. Although slightly higher than that of the same period a year ago, the coverage rate was still lower than that of other age groups of children. To enhance relevant vaccination services and boost the vaccination rate, the Government has opened the DH's Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) to all children aged 6 months to under 2 years. Parents may book an appointment for their children to receive vaccinations at designated MCHCs via the [online booking system](#).

For the latest information, members of the public can visit the CHP's [seasonal influenza](#) and [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) webpages.