

DH offers free HPV vaccination to eligible female post-secondary students

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced today (April 1) that the second phase of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Catch-up Programme has been launched. This Programme provides free HPV vaccination to female Hong Kong residents born between 2004 and 2008 who are currently studying at local post-secondary institutions (PSI) and are registered with eHealth.

"The CHP sent invitations to PSI in December last year to participate in the Programme. As of yesterday (March 31), all PSI have joined, and six of them have started activities in mid-March, which include offering vaccinations at campus health service or arranging outreach teams to administer the HPV vaccine to eligible female students on campus. The schedules for vaccination activities of each institution have been uploaded to the CHP's [website](#) (see Annex 1) for easy reference, and students can check with their student affairs office for details about the vaccination arrangements of their institutions," said the Controller of the CHP, Dr Edwin Tsui.

"In Hong Kong, cervical cancer was the ninth most common female cancer in 2022, with 522 new cases and 167 deaths. HPV vaccines are highly effective in preventing high-risk HPV types that are most frequently associated with cervical cancer. The DH learned that some students do not want to get vaccinated because they are worried about side effects or even misbelieve rumours that shock, early menstruation, increased sexual activity, etc, may occur after HPV vaccination, but these incorrect claims are completely unsubstantiated by scientific evidence," he added. To address unnecessary misunderstandings and concerns, the CHP hosted a webinar on March 19 with an enthusiastic response, which was attended by nearly 200 participants. Information of the webinar has been posted on the CHP's website. Furthermore, the CHP has launched promotional videos on social media to enhance public understanding of the HPV vaccine and encourage eligible females to grasp the opportunity to receive the vaccine for optimal protection.

The CHP has included HPV vaccination in the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme since the 2019/20 school year for Primary Five and Six female students. So far, approximately 97 600 girls have completed two doses of the vaccine, accounting for about 90 per cent of eligible girls, far exceeding the interim target (70 per cent) outlined in the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy 2019.

In line with the latest World Health Organization recommendations, the DH launched the first phase of the HPV Vaccination Catch-up Programme in December last year. This phase provided free vaccines to female students studying at full-time secondary schools (including the secondary section of

special schools) who were in Form Five or above and registered with eHealth. As of April 1, over 510 schools (approximately 98 per cent of eligible schools) have responded or indicated their participation. Among these, nearly 280 schools have already conducted vaccination activities, with over 14 000 doses administered. Counting doses administered under the Programme and self-arranged vaccinations, the first-dose HPV vaccine coverage rate is over 70 per cent.

"The CHP has asked secondary schools that do not arrange vaccination activities to inform parents. The list of these schools (see Annex 2) has also been uploaded to the CHP's [website](#), so that parents of students from these schools can arrange for their daughters to receive the vaccine at the DH's School Immunisation Team sub-offices or Student Health Service Centres," said Dr Tsui.

The third phase of the Programme will start in the first half of 2025. Targeted recipients are female Hong Kong residents born between 2004 and 2008 who have already completed their studies in Hong Kong. The third phase will also cover the remaining female Hong Kong residents born between 2004 and 2008 who have not yet completed their HPV vaccination. The CHP, together with the Primary Healthcare Commission, is finalising the arrangements for the third phase, with a preliminary plan to offer vaccinations at district Women Wellness Satellites and District Health Centres. Details will be announced in due course.

â€œThis HPV Vaccination Catch-up Programme is a one-off special arrangement that will last for about two years. Eligible female Hong Kong residents who do not participate in the Programme may receive the vaccine at their own expense in the future. For more information about the Programme, the public can visit the CHP's thematic [website](#).