

Scientific Committee updates recommendations on HPV vaccination in Hong Kong

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health (DH) convened an online meeting yesterday (November 29) to discuss the use of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine in Hong Kong. The updated recommendations were published today (November 30).

Currently, eligible female primary school students of suitable ages will be provided with HPV vaccine under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme (HKCIP) to prevent cervical cancer. The first dose of HPV vaccine is given via outreach by the DH's School Immunisation Teams to Primary Five female students at their schools, and a second dose is given to the girls when they reach Primary Six in the following school year.

The SCVPD, upon reviewing up-to-date overseas and local scientific evidence and taking into account the World Health Organization (WHO)'s updated recommendations as well as overseas practices, recommends that the Government provide mop-up HPV vaccination for secondary school female students or older girls (18 years or below).

Experts also appraised data from overseas studies and the local situation. Noting the high HPV vaccination coverage of over 80 per cent in girls under the HKCIP, the SCVPD expected that there would be minimal incremental benefit from adding HPV vaccine to the routine HKCIP for boys. Together with a lack of local cost-benefit and acceptability data, the SCVPD does not recommend including HPV vaccine in the HKCIP for boys at this juncture. On the other hand, parents may choose to vaccinate their boys for better personal protection, and they could seek advice from family doctors on the benefits and limitations of vaccination.

In addition, regarding the number of doses of HPV vaccine required, upon reviewing the WHO recommendations, overseas practice and scientific evidence, the SCVPD recommends maintaining a two-dose schedule for immunocompetent individuals aged 9 to 14 years. For immunocompetent individuals aged 15 years or above, the current three-dose schedule can be changed to two doses. Nevertheless, SCVPD recommends maintaining a three-dose schedule for individuals who are immunocompromised.

The recommendations have been uploaded to the SCVPD webpage www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/24008.html.