

VSS Doctors' Guide - Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Code of practice

It is the prime responsibility of all doctors and healthcare providers to ensure safety and quality of the vaccination service delivered to clients. All enrolled doctors should follow the Code of Practice issued by the Medical Council of Hong Kong as the standard for locally registered medical practitioners to provide quality health care. All registered medical practitioners are earnestly advised to read through the Code of Professional Conduct issued by The Medical Council of Hong Kong (<http://www.mchk.org.hk/code.htm>). Please observe in particular the following sections to acquaint themselves thoroughly with its contents, thereby avoiding the danger of inadvertently transgressing accepted codes of professional ethical behaviour which may lead to disciplinary action by the Medical Council:-

- a) Part II D12 “Fees”;
- b) part II E21 “Covering or improper delegation of medical duties to non-qualified persons”; and
- c) part II G26 “Untrue or misleading certificates and similar documents”.

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1.2 What is Vaccination Subsidy Scheme?

The Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS), administered by the Department of Health (DH), provides incentive to facilitate vulnerable groups of Hong Kong residents to get vaccinations from private medical doctors enrolled in the scheme. The VSS 2016/17 covers:

- (1) **seasonal influenza vaccinations** for five target groups, including
 - (a) pregnant women
 - (b) elders aged 65 years or above
 - (c) children aged 6 months to less than 12 years
 - (d) persons with intellectual disability
 - (e) persons receiving disability allowance **AND**
- (2) **pneumococcal vaccinations** for eligible elders. Elders aged 65 years or above who have never pneumococcal vaccination before can receive subsidy for one dose of pneumococcal vaccination (23-valent pneumococcal vaccine).

For private doctors, (1) they can enroll in VSS anytime; (2) in 2016/17 season, the Government will subsidise **HK\$ 190 per dose of seasonal influenza/pneumococcal vaccine** given to eligible person (see Section 1.3) under VSS. The subsidy is reimbursed by DH to private doctors joining VSS. Subsidy for the seasonal influenza will be available for eligible persons from October/November 2016* onwards. Eligible persons are advised to receive influenza vaccination as soon as the vaccines become available; (3) there is no specified vaccination period for pneumococcal vaccination which has been continuous since its launch in October 2009.

The DH has set up the Vaccination Office to administer the scheme. Contact details are as follows:-

Address: Vaccination Office
Centre for Health Protection
2/F, 147C Argyle Street, Kowloon

Fax: 2713 9576

Email: vacs@dh.gov.hk

Telephone: 2125 2125

Operating hours: 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., (including lunch hours) Monday through Friday (closed on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays)

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1.3 What service providers can participate in VSS?

A doctor can join VSS if he/she:-

- a) is a registered medical practitioner within the meaning of the Medical Registration Ordinance (Cap 161);
- b) holds a valid annual practicing certificate; and
- c) works in the private medical sector (including university and non-government organisations).
- d) To join VSS, a doctor is required to enroll in advance (see Section 3 Participating in VSS).

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1.4 Who are eligible for subsidised seasonal influenza vaccination under VSS in 2016/17?

1.4.1 PREGNANT WOMEN

A pregnant woman is eligible for subsidy by VSS if she fulfils criteria **(a)** **AND (b)** listed as follows:-

- a) holds valid identity/ travel documents proving Hong Kong resident status.
Please refer to **Appendix A** for sample of the identity/ travel documents;

AND

- b) holds a medical certificate certifying the person is pregnant issued by a registered medical practitioner; **OR**
- c) her pregnancy status is confirmed by the attending enrolled doctor

1.4.2 ELDERLY

An elder is eligible for subsidy by VSS if he fulfils criteria **(a)** **AND (b)** listed as follows:-

- a) holds valid identity/ travel documents proving Hong Kong resident status. Please refer to **Appendix A** for sample of the identity/ travel documents;

AND

- b) age of 65 years or above in the year of receiving the vaccine(s).

1.4.3 CHILDREN

A child is eligible for subsidy by VSS if he fulfils criteria **(a)** **AND (b)** listed as follows:-

- a) holds valid identity/ travel documents proving Hong Kong resident status
(please refer to **Appendix A** for sample of the identity/ travel documents);

AND

- b) meets either of the following conditions:-
 - (i) between the age of 6 months and less than 12 years on the day

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- receiving the first dose of seasonal influenza vaccine; **OR**
- (ii) 12 years old or above attending a primary institution (documentation by student handbook or student card).

1.4.4 PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY (PID)

A PID is eligible for subsidy by VSS if he fulfils criteria **(a) AND (b)** listed as follows:-

- a) holds valid identity/ travel documents proving Hong Kong resident status. Please refer to **Appendix A** for sample of the identity/ travel documents;

AND

- b) meets one of the following conditions:-
- (i) holds a valid Registration Card for People with Disabilities (with indication of intellectual disability[^]) issued by Labour and Welfare Bureau (Central Registry for Rehabilitation). Please refer to **Appendix C** for a sample of the Registration Card; **OR**
- (ii) holds a medical certificate issued by a Registered Medical Practitioner that the PID is entitled for subsidised vaccination. Please refer to **Appendix C** for a sample of the medical certificate; **OR**

(You may wish to base on the medical history, clinical assessment and documents provided by the parents/guardians, taking reference to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition, 1994 (DSM-IV) or 5th edition (DSM-V) to certify the eligibility. Please refer to **Appendix B** for DSM(IV) and DSM(V).)

- (iii) holds a certificate issued by the Person-in-charge of designated Persons with Intellectual Disability Institutions that the PID is a service user of the institution. Please refer to **Appendix C** for a sample of the certificate.

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1.4.5 PERSONS RECEIVING DISABILITY ALLOWANCE (PDA)

A PDA is eligible for subsidy by VSS if he fulfils criteria **(a) AND (b)** listed as follows:-

- a) holds valid identity/ travel documents proving Hong Kong resident status.
Please refer to **Appendix A** for sample of the identity/ travel documents;

AND

- b) is a recipient of the Social Welfare Department's Disability Allowance. Please refer to **Appendix D** for a sample of a valid Letter of Notification of Successful Application for Disability Allowance issued by the Social Welfare Department.

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1.5 Type of Vaccines covered in VSS

1.5.1 Seasonal Influenza Vaccine

Under VSS, eligible persons are recommended to receive one dose of influenza vaccine in 2016/17 except for vaccine-naïve children aged below 9 years, two doses with an interval of 4 weeks are required and will be subsidised by the Government. Please note that there are different preparations available in the market. Some are registered for use for persons aged above three years old only. Hence, for children less than 3 years old, you are required to pay special attention to the product information, in particular the **age-range registered** for use and the **recommended dosage**, before administration.

Vaccine Composition

In May 2016, the SCVPD issued the recommendations for influenza vaccination in Hong Kong for the 2016/17 season. In accordance with the World Health Organization's recommendation, the vaccine recommended by the SCVPD in the 2016/17 season (for northern hemisphere winter) contains the following:

- an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09 -like virus
- an A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Brisbane /60/2008-like virus

Trivalent influenza vaccine (TIV) consists of the above three seasonal influenza viruses. If quadrivalent influenza vaccine (QIV) is being used, it shall contain the above three viruses and a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus.

Vaccine Type

Both trivalent and quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccines are registered for use in Hong Kong. Trivalent influenza vaccine may potentially prevent majority of influenza burden in Hong Kong, while quadrivalent influenza vaccine may potentially offer additional protection against influenza B.

Vaccination precautions

People who are allergic to a previous dose of inactivated seasonal influenza

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vaccine or other vaccine components (please refer to the insert of the vaccine) are not suitable to have the inactivated seasonal influenza vaccination. Individuals with mild egg allergy who are considering an influenza vaccination can be given inactivated seasonal influenza vaccine in primary care. Individuals with diagnosed or suspected severe egg allergy should be seen by an allergist/immunologist for evaluation of egg allergy and for administration of inactivated seasonal influenza vaccine if clinically indicated. Those with bleeding disorders or on anticoagulants may receive the vaccine by deep subcutaneous injection*. If an individual suffers from fever on the day of vaccination, the vaccination should be deferred till recovery.

Seasonal influenza vaccination may be rarely followed by serious adverse events such as Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) (1.03 case per 1 million vaccinees), meningitis or encephalopathy (1 in 3 million doses distributed), and severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) (9 in 10 million doses distributed).

GBS is a polyneuritis which may follow about two weeks after viral infection, surgery or rarely after immunisation. It is characterised by progressive weakness of all limbs and areflexia. So far, no clear association has been found between GBS with seasonal influenza vaccine. The risk of Guillain-Barré Syndrome after influenza infection (17.20 per million) is higher than after influenza vaccination (1.03 per million). For reference, please refer to the Hong Kong Reference Framework for Preventive Care for Children in Primary Care Settings - Module on Immunisation (http://www.pco.gov.hk/english/resource/files/Module_on_Immunisation_Children.pdf)

****Note: All doctors are advised to read carefully the product information of the vaccines they have procured, noting especially the contraindications, route of administration, dosage and expiry date, storage and handling. To avoid administering expired vaccines to clients, doctors should dispose the expired vaccines properly.**

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1.5.2 Pneumococcal vaccine

Under VSS, elders aged 65 years or above who have never received pneumococcal vaccination before can receive subsidy for one dose of pneumococcal vaccination.

Vaccine Type

Only 23-valent pneumococcal vaccine is included in the scope of subsidised pneumococcal vaccination under VSS in 2016/17 season.

Vaccination precautions

Pneumococcal vaccine has demonstrated good safety and side effect profiles. Slight swelling and tenderness at the injection site may occur shortly following injection. Local reactions are more severe following a second dose but most resolve within a few days without treatment. Systemic reactions are rare but transient fever has been reported.

Severe allergic reaction to a vaccine component or following a prior dose is a contraindication to further doses of vaccine. Persons with moderate or severe acute illness should not be vaccinated until their condition improves. For reference, please refer to the Hong Kong Reference Framework for Preventive Care for Children in Primary Care Settings - Module on Immunisation (http://www.pco.gov.hk/english/resource/files/Module_on_Immunisation_Children.pdf)

For individuals who will undergo elective splenectomy, pneumococcal vaccines should be given at least 2 weeks before the procedures if possible. Pneumococcal vaccines should not be given during chemotherapy or radiotherapy for cancer.

****Note: All doctors are advised to read carefully the product information of the vaccines they have procured, noting especially the contraindications, route of administration, dosage and expiry date, storage and handling. To avoid administering expired vaccines to clients, doctors should dispose the expired vaccines properly.**

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1.6 Reporting vaccine adverse reaction

Adverse drug reaction (ADR) reporting is important for vaccine safety surveillance and programme monitoring. Health care professionals are therefore encouraged to report suspected serious or unexpected ADR.

Serious ADR is defined as an adverse reaction which:-

- a) is fatal;
- b) is life-threatening;
- c) results in or prolongs hospitalisation;
- d) causes persistent incapacity or disability; or
- e) causes birth defects.

Please refer to Section 5 of the Hong Kong Reference Framework for Preventive Care for Children in Primary Care Settings - Module on Immunisation (http://www.pco.gov.hk/english/resource/files/Module_on_Immunisation_Children.pdf or **Appendix H**) for Monitoring and Management of Adverse Events Following Immunisation.

Please refer to the website of the Pharmacovigilance Unit of Drug Office, the Department of Health for Reporting an Adverse Drug Reaction Guidance notes and ADR report form. (http://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/healthcare_providers/adr_reporting/adr_report_form.html)