



**衛生防護中心**  
Centre for Health Protection

**Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases  
and  
Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases**

**Consensus Interim Recommendations on  
the Use of COVID-19 Vaccines in Hong Kong  
(As of 11 October 2023)**

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (SCEZD) under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health (JSC) discussed and updated the interim recommendations related to the use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong.

2. The JSC made the following interim recommendations based on the review of the COVID-19 epidemiology in the local context, and taking reference from the latest recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO) and overseas practices.

3. The JSC reiterated the importance of COVID-19 vaccination in preventing severe disease for those at risk, and hence urged individuals in high-risk priority groups to receive a dose of COVID-19 vaccine at least six months since the last dose or infection as early as possible in view of the potential winter surge, regardless of the number of doses received previously.



4. The high-risk priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination remain unchanged from those set out in the previous recommendations dated 29 March 2023<sup>1</sup>. For children and adolescents aged six months to 17 years with comorbidities as well as healthy adults aged 18 to 49 years, an additional dose of COVID-19 vaccine may be considered based on personal choice.

5. The JSC recommended that any currently available vaccines (i.e. inactivated/mRNA ancestral vaccines or mRNA bivalent vaccine) which remain effective in preventing severe disease and death should be used, since timely boosting enhances protection ahead of the possible winter surge. In view of the coming winter influenza season, co-administration of COVID-19 vaccine and seasonal influenza vaccine is strongly recommended.

6. It should be noted that the updated recommendation should not be positioned as an annual or regular COVID-19 vaccination.

#### **Use of monovalent XBB-containing mRNA vaccines**

7. The JSC noted that new vaccines have been developed to target the Omicron variant XBB.1.5. After reviewing the available immunogenicity and safety data, JSC considered that the XBB-containing mRNA vaccines are expected to offer safe, modestly enhanced protection against circulating and recently emerging variants.

8. Taking into account the latest scientific evidence, WHO and international recommendations as well as local situation, JSC considered the new monovalent XBB.1.5 mRNA vaccine, when available, a preferred vaccine choice in appropriate age group according to manufacturer's recommendation. Those at greatest risk of severe COVID-19, such as elderly persons living in residential care homes, should be given a higher priority to receive the monovalent XBB.1.5 mRNA vaccines in case of limited local supply.

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<sup>1</sup> High-risk priority groups comprising (i) Persons aged 50 years and above including those living in residential care homes, (ii) Persons aged 18 to 49 years with underlying comorbidities, (iii) Persons with immunocompromising conditions aged 6 months and above, (iv) Pregnant women (once during each pregnancy), and (v) Healthcare workers.

9. In view that any vaccine would undergo evaluation by the regulatory authority to ensure meeting of safety, efficacy and quality requirements for registration in Hong Kong, the JSC has no objection to the use of registered COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong according to manufacturer's recommendation and clinical assessment. Vaccination should be given under informed consent.

10. The JSC will continue to monitor the evolving scientific evidence and inform future advice by ongoing surveillance of COVID-19 infection rates, clinical outcomes and new variants, alongside vaccine effectiveness and safety.

11. The above interim recommendations provide an update on top of the previous recommendations issued on 29 March and 6 June 2023.

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