

2021/22

# Vaccination Schemes



Protect yourself and those around you

Get seasonal influenza vaccination



# About seasonal influenza vaccine

## Why is seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) important?

Seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) is one of the effective means to prevent seasonal influenza (influenza) and its complications, as well as reduce influenza related hospitalisation and death. A person getting influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and has higher death rate. Influenza vaccination may reduce hospitalisation and length of stay. Therefore, it is important to receive both SIV and COVID-19 vaccination. For the arrangement of SIV and COVID-19 vaccination, please consult doctor.

## Is it necessary to get vaccinated against influenza every year?

**Yes.** The circulating seasonal influenza strains may change from time to time. In accordance with the circulating strains, the influenza vaccine composition is updated every year to enhance protection. The immunity built up in a vaccinated person in the prior season will decrease over time and may become too low to provide protection in the next season. In addition, the vaccine compositions of the 2021-22 influenza vaccine are different from those in 2020-21 season.

## Does the influenza vaccine work right away?

**No.** The body takes about 2 weeks to develop antibodies after vaccination for protection against influenza virus. For prevention against influenza, vaccinated individuals should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene practices, balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest and no smoking.

## How much protection does the influenza vaccine provide?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), when the vaccine strains closely match the circulating influenza viruses, efficacy of inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) in individuals younger than 65 years of age typically range from 70% to 90%. For live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV), overseas studies and clinical experiences had generally indicated LAIV provides comparable protection against influenza to that afforded by IIV.

# Who should receive SIV?

Given that influenza vaccines are safe and effective and severe cases can occur even in healthy persons, all members of the public of age 6 months or above, except those with known contraindications, should receive SIV for personal protection.

In addition, people who are in the priority groups are generally at increased risk of severe influenza or transmitting influenza to those at high risk. Therefore, they should have **higher priority** for SIV.

In the 2021-22 season, the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) recommends the following **priority** groups for SIV in Hong Kong:

- Healthcare workers (including care workers in Residential Care Homes for the Elderly [RCHE] and Residential Care Homes for Persons with Disabilities [RCHD])
- Persons of age 50 years or above
- Pregnant women
- Residents of Residential Care Homes (such as RCHE or RCHD)
- Persons with chronic medical problems\*
- Children of age 6 months to 11 years
- Poultry workers
- Pig farmers and pig-slaughtering industry personnel



Members of the public can consult their family doctors to receive SIV for personal protection.

\* For details of the chronic medical problems, please consult doctors.

## About types of seasonal influenza vaccine

What types of influenza vaccines are recommended for use in Hong Kong by SCVPD?

**Inactivated** influenza vaccine (IIV), **recombinant** influenza vaccine (RIV) and **live attenuated** influenza vaccine (LAIV) are recommended for use in Hong Kong by SCVPD.

# Who should not receive SIV ?

## Inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV)

People who have a history of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine component or a previous dose of any influenza vaccine are not suitable to have IIV. Individuals with mild egg allergy who are considering a SIV can be given IIV in primary care setting. Individuals with a history of anaphylaxis to egg should have influenza vaccine administered by healthcare professionals in appropriate medical facilities with capacity to recognise and manage severe allergic reactions. Influenza vaccine contains ovalbumin (an egg protein), but the vaccine manufacturing process involves repeated purification and the ovalbumin content is very low. Even people who are allergic to eggs are generally safe to receive SIV. Those with bleeding disorders or on anticoagulants should consult their doctors for advice. If an individual suffers from fever on the day of vaccination, vaccination should be deferred until recovery.

## Recombinant influenza vaccine (RIV)

Recombinant influenza vaccine is recommended for use in individuals of 18 years of age or above. People who have a history of hypersensitivity to any vaccine component of the RIV are not suitable to receive RIV. Those with bleeding disorders or on anticoagulants should consult their doctors for advice. If an individual suffers from fever on the day of vaccination, vaccination should be deferred till recover. Recombinant influenza vaccine does not require egg in the production process. Please consult your doctor for details.

## Live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)

Live attenuated influenza vaccine is a live vaccine and is generally contraindicated in the following conditions, taking reference from recommendations of the United States, United Kingdom and Canada:

- History of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine component or after previous dose of any influenza vaccine;
- Concomitant aspirin or salicylate-containing therapy in children and adolescents;
- Children 2 years through 4 years who have asthma or who have had a history of wheezing in the past 12 months;
- Children and adults who are immunocompromised due to any cause;
- Close contacts and caregivers of severely immunosuppressed persons who require a protected environment;
- Pregnancy;
- Receipt of influenza antiviral medication within previous 48 hours.

Individuals with mild egg allergy can be given LAIV in primary care setting. Individuals with a history of anaphylaxis to egg should have influenza vaccine administered by healthcare professionals in appropriate medical facilities with capacity to recognise and manage severe allergic reactions. Influenza vaccine contains ovalbumin (an egg protein), but the vaccine manufacturing process involves repeated purification and the ovalbumin content is very low. Even people who are allergic to eggs are generally safe to receive vaccination. Please consult your doctor for details.

## What are the possible side effects following influenza vaccine administration ?

### Inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV)

Inactivated influenza vaccine is very safe and usually well tolerated apart from occasional soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site. Some recipients may experience fever, muscle pain and tiredness beginning 6 to 12 hours after vaccination and lasting up to 2 days. If fever or discomforts persist, please consult a doctor. Immediate severe allergic reactions like hives, swelling of the lips or tongue and difficulties in breathing are rare and require emergency consultation.

Seasonal influenza vaccination may be rarely followed by serious adverse events such as Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) (about 1 to 2 cases per million vaccinees) and severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) (9 per 10 million doses distributed). However, SIV may not necessarily have causal relations with these adverse events. Studies have shown that the risk of GBS after influenza infection (17.20 per million infected persons) is much higher than after SIV (1.03 per million vaccine recipients).

### Recombinant influenza vaccine (RIV)

The most common side effects following RIV administration include tenderness and pain over the injection site. Recipients may also experience headache, fatigue, muscle pain and joint pain.

### Live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)

The most common adverse reactions following LAIV administration are nasal congestion or runny nose (in all ages), fever (in children) and sore throat (in adults). The safety in pregnant women has not been established. Children of age below 5 years with recurrent wheezing or persons of any age with asthma may be at an increased risk of wheezing following administration.

## What are the differences among IIV, RIV and LAIV?

Inactivated influenza vaccine contains inactivated (killed) viruses. Recombinant influenza vaccine contains haemagglutinin (a surface protein of influenza virus) that is produced by recombinant technology, and does not require egg or influenza virus in the production process. Both IIV and RIV are given by injection, LAIV contains weakened viruses and is given by intranasal spray. All these 3 vaccines are effective, but there are some differences in their indications. Depending on individual product, most IIVs are recommended for use among persons of age 6 months or above, including those who are healthy, pregnant women and those with chronic medical problems. Recombinant influenza vaccine is recommended for use in individuals of 18 years of age or above. Live attenuated influenza vaccine can be used for people of age 2 to 49 years except those who are pregnant, immunocompromised or with other contraindications. Please consult your doctor for details.

## About children

### Why children of age 6 months to 11 years are recommended to receive SIV?

Seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for children of age 6 months to 11 years for reducing influenza related complications such as excess hospitalisations or deaths. Overseas studies have shown that vaccinating young school children may potentially reduce school absenteeism and influenza transmission in the community.

### Can children receive SIV if he / she has received / will receive other immunisation?

Inactivated influenza vaccine can be given at the same time or at any time before or after other inactivated vaccine (e.g. Hepatitis B vaccine) or live vaccine (e.g. Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine). Different vaccines should be given at different injection sites if IIV and other vaccines are given at the same time. For individuals receiving LAIV, other live vaccines not administered on the same day should be administered at least 4 weeks apart.



## How many doses of SIV will my child need?

To ensure adequate immunity against seasonal influenza, children under 9 years of age who have never received any SIV before are recommended to receive two doses of SIV with a minimum interval of 4 weeks in the 2021-22 season. Children of age below 9 years who have received at least one dose of SIV before are recommended to receive one dose of SIV in the 2021-22 season. For persons of age 9 years or above, only one dose of SIV is required in each influenza season.

## About pregnant women

### Why should pregnant women receive SIV?

Seasonal influenza vaccination in pregnant women has shown benefits for both pregnant woman and child in terms of reduced acute respiratory infections. The WHO considers IIV to be safe in pregnancy and there is no evidence showing that IIV can cause abnormality in foetus even if given during the first trimester. However, pregnant women should NOT receive LAIV because it contains live viruses. Recombinant influenza vaccine is not contraindicated in pregnancy. Pregnant women should consult a doctor for any queries.



## About persons of age 50 years or above

### Why should persons of age 50 years or above receive SIV?

Persons of age 50 to 64 years should receive SIV because local influenza epidemiology showed that, irrespective of high-risk conditions, they were having a higher risk of intensive care unit admission and death associated with influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 infection. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 is a common type of seasonal influenza virus.

The SCVPD recommends SIV for elderly persons of age 65 years or above because of their higher risk of complications, excess hospital admissions and deaths from influenza. The WHO has recommended older adults as one of the highest priority group to receive influenza vaccine during the COVID-19 pandemic.





# Vaccination arrangement for Hong Kong residents

The Government implements Government Vaccination Programme (GVP) and Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS) to provide free or subsidised SIV to eligible Hong Kong residents. The subsidy level under VSS 2021/22 is \$240 per dose. Please note that the fees charged by different private doctors may vary. Some private doctors do not charge any fee.

## Children

Children of age 6 months to 11 years old, or 12 years or above but studying at a primary school can receive SIV with subsidy, from private doctors enrolled in VSS.

Children come from families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or holding valid Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges can receive free SIV under GVP at Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHC) or Student Health Service Centres of the Department of Health (DH).

School children of primary schools (including primary section of special schools), kindergartens, kindergarten-cum-child care centres and child care centres participating in 2021/22 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination School Outreach (Free of charge) or Vaccination Subsidy Scheme School Outreach (Extra charge allowed) programmes can receive free or subsidised SIV at their schools.

## Pregnant women

Pregnant women can receive SIV with subsidy, from private doctors enrolled in VSS.

Pregnant women who are receiving CSSA or holding valid Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges can receive free SIV under GVP at MCHC of the DH or antenatal clinics of the Hospital Authority.

## Persons of age 50 to 64 years

Persons of age 50 to 64 years can receive SIV with subsidy, from private doctors enrolled in VSS.

Persons of age 50 to 64 years who are receiving CSSA or holding valid Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges can receive free SIV at public clinics under GVP.

## Elderly of age 65 years or above

Elderly of age 65 years or above can receive SIV with subsidy, from private doctors enrolled in VSS.

Elderly can also choose to receive free SIV under GVP through designated public clinics, or Elderly Health Centres of the DH.

For details and other arrangement of free or subsidised SIV, please visit Centre for Health Protection Website [www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk) or call 2125 2125 for enquiry.



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