



Get your child vaccinated Extra protection from influenza

What is Vaccination Subsidy Scheme (VSS)?

To encourage seasonal influenza vaccination (influenza vaccination) among eligible persons, the Government will continue to implement the VSS in 2019/20. Starting from Oct / Nov 2019[#], children between the age of 6 months to less than 12 years; or those aged 12 years or above but attending a primary school in Hong Kong, may receive influenza vaccine from private doctors who have enrolled into the Scheme, with subsidy of HK\$210 per dose. Eligible children aged less than 9 years and have not received influenza vaccination before, are entitled to receive 2 doses with subsidy.

(Some schools may arrange healthcare personnel to provide free or subsidised outreach vaccination activities in schools. Please consult your child's school for details.)

Is my child eligible to receive the Government subsidy?

To be eligible for the Government subsidy of influenza vaccine, the child must be a Hong Kong resident AND:

- between the age of 6 months and less than 12 years; or
- aged 12 years or above but attending a primary school in Hong Kong.

Eligible children from families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or holders of valid Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges issued by the Social Welfare Department, may receive free influenza vaccination from Maternal and Child Health Centres (6 months to under 6 years) or the Student Health Service Centres (6 to under 12 years) of the Department of Health (DH).

When should parents bring their children for subsidised influenza vaccination?

VSS starts in Oct / Nov 2019[#]. As it usually takes about 2 weeks for antibodies to develop and provide protection against influenza virus. If the child's school does not arrange outreach vaccination activities, parents are advised to bring their child to enrolled private doctors' clinics for vaccination as early as possible.

How do parents know which doctors have joined VSS providing subsidised influenza vaccination?

Some private doctors, but not all, will join the VSS. Enrolled private doctors will display a VSS logo in their clinics. Information about enrolled doctors and the extra fees they charge will be uploaded to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) website (<https://apps.hcv.gov.hk/SDIR/EN/index.aspx>).



List of Participating Doctors of VSS

How much will parents pay for influenza vaccination for their children?

Parents may or may not pay a fee (deducting the Government subsidy from the doctor's fee) to the enrolled private doctors for influenza vaccination service. For example, if the fee originally charged by the doctor is HK\$280, the parent only has to pay HK\$70 under the VSS. It is important to note that the fees charged by different private doctors may vary. Some private doctors do not charge any fee. Doctors will list the fees they charge for vaccination on a VSS price poster in the clinic waiting area.

If the parent is unable to accompany the child personally to the doctor's clinic, can he/she ask another person, e.g. a relative / domestic helper, to bring the child there?

Yes. The parent must complete and sign the Consent to Use Vaccination Subsidy Form before visiting the doctor's clinic. The Form is available at the enrolled doctors' clinics, or can be downloaded from CHP website.

What kinds of documents are necessary?

Parents should bring along their child's identity documents showing Hong Kong resident status (e.g. Hong Kong Identity Card or Hong Kong Birth Certificate). If the child is 12 years old or above but attending a primary school in Hong Kong, please also bring along the child's Student Handbook / Student Card and submit a photocopy to the doctor. Besides, please bring all of the child's vaccination record(s) for doctor's reference.

#Please take note of the Government's announcement.

For more information about children receiving seasonal influenza vaccination, please visit the CHP website <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/18877.html>.



Vaccination Scheme (Children)

This year the Centre for Health Protection continues to recommend children aged 6 months to 11 years (under 12 years) to receive seasonal influenza vaccination 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.

1. What is the recommended composition of the 2019-20 seasonal influenza vaccine?

The quadrivalent influenza vaccine recommended by the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (SCVPD) in 2019-20 contains the following:

- an A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- an A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus

If trivalent influenza vaccine is being used, the influenza B component shall contain a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus.

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

Both inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) are recommended for use in Hong Kong by SCVPD. For IIVs, quadrivalent IIV is preferred to trivalent IIV due to the additional protection against one more lineage of influenza B offered by quadrivalent IIV.

3. What are the differences between inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)?

The IIV contains dead viruses and is given by injection, while LAIV contains weakened viruses and is a nasal-spray vaccine. Both IIV and LAIV are effective, but there are some differences in their indications. Depending on individual product, most IIVs are recommended for use among persons aged 6 months or above. LAIV can be used for people 2 to 49 years of age except those who are pregnant, immunocompromised or with other contraindications. Please consult your doctor for details.

4. Who should not receive 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 inactivated seasonal influenza vaccination. Individuals with mild egg allergy who are considering an influenza vaccination can be given IIV in primary care setting. Individuals with a history of anaphylaxis to egg should have seasonal influenza vaccine administered by health care professionals in appropriate medical facilities with capacity to recognise and manage severe allergic reactions. Influenza vaccine contains ovalbumin (a chicken protein), but the vaccine manufacturing process involves repeated purification and the amount of ovalbumin is very minute. Even people who are allergic to eggs are generally safe to receive vaccination. Those with bleeding disorders or on anticoagulants should consult their doctors for advice. If an individual suffers from fever on the day of vaccination, the vaccination should be deferred till recovery.

5. Who should not receive live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)?

LAIV 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; and
- Receipt of influenza antiviral medication within previous 48 hours.

*** The UK recommends that vaccination with LAIV should be deferred in children with a history of active wheezing in the past 72 hours or those who have increased their use of bronchodilators in the previous 72 hours. If their condition has not improved after a further 72 hours then these children should be offered an IIV. Canada recommends that individuals with severe asthma or those with medically attended wheezing in the 7 days prior to vaccination should not use LAIV.*

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

6. What are the possible side effects of the 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. Influenza vaccination may be rarely followed by serious adverse events such as Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) (1 to 2 cases per million vaccinees) and severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) (9 per 10 million doses distributed). However, influenza vaccination 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 influenza vaccination (1.03 per million vaccine recipients).

7. What are the possible side effects of 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 aged below 5 years with recurrent wheezing / persons of any age with asthma may be at increased risk of wheezing following administration.

8. Can my child receive the seasonal influenza vaccination if he / she has received / will receive other immunisation?

Inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) does not interfere with the effectiveness of other vaccines. It can be given at the same time or at different time with either 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 live attenuated influenza vaccine, other live vaccines not administered on the same day should be administered at least 4 weeks apart.