

Regarding Seasonal Influenza Vaccination for Elders



Centre for Health Protection



Department of Health

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Why elders need to receive seasonal influenza vaccination?



Seasonal Influenza is a common respiratory infectious disease. Elders getting the infection are at higher risk for influenza complications, excess hospital admissions and death. Vaccination can effectively prevent influenza and its complications. Hence, influenza vaccination is especially important for elders and for people who live with or take care of them.

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How much protection does influenza vaccine provide?



When the vaccine strains closely match the circulating influenza viruses, efficacy of inactivated influenza vaccine in healthy adults typically range from 70% to 90%. Although the efficacy of the vaccine in elders may be lower than that in healthy adults, it is still an effective way to reduce severity of the illness, its complications and deaths. Even when circulating strains do not match exactly with vaccine components, influenza vaccine can still provide cross protection to reduce severity of the illness.



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Do I need to receive the seasonal influenza vaccination every year?



Yes. The circulating seasonal influenza strains change from time to time. The immunity acquired from the influenza caused by certain strains may not have enough protection to the circulating seasonal influenza strains. In addition, the immunity built up will decrease over time and become too low to provide protection. Therefore, we need to receive seasonal influenza vaccination every year.

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Is seasonal influenza vaccine safe?



Seasonal influenza vaccine is very safe and has been used over 60 years. It is usually well tolerated apart from occasional soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site. Some recipients may experience fever, muscle and joint pains, and tiredness lasting up to two 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.



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Where can elders go for influenza vaccination?



Hong Kong residents aged 65 or above can receive free influenza vaccination at designated public clinics under the Government Vaccination Programme.

Elders may also choose to receive influenza vaccination from private doctors enrolled to the Elderly Vaccination Subsidy Scheme with subsidy provided by the government. Elders aged 70 years or above can use their health care vouchers (HCV) to pay additional service fee if the doctor has also joined the HCV Scheme.

Residents of residential care homes for the elderly can receive free influenza vaccination in the homes by Visiting Medical Officers under the Residential Care Home Vaccination Programme.



For more information about the influenza vaccine and the vaccination programmes, please call the **Department of Health Hotline 2125 2125 or visit the **Centre for Health Protection website www.chp.gov.hk****