




2015/16



**Prevent
seasonal influenza**

**Get influenza
vaccination now**

**2015
2016**



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection



衛生署
Department of Health

Why is seasonal influenza (influenza) vaccination important?



Influenza is an infectious disease caused by various types of influenza virus. The disease is characterised by fever, sore throat, cough, headache, muscle aches, runny nose and general tiredness. It is usually self-limiting with recovery in 2 – 7 days. However, it can be a serious illness to the weak and frail, or elderly persons, and may be complicated by bronchitis, chest infection or even death in the most serious cases. Serious influenza infection can occur even in healthy individuals. Influenza vaccination is one of the effective means to prevent the infection, its complications and associated hospitalisation and death.

Should persons receive 2015/16 Northern hemisphere seasonal influenza vaccine if they have already been vaccinated with 2015 Southern hemisphere seasonal influenza vaccine?

Who should receive influenza vaccination?

In 2015/16, the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases recommends the following priority groups for Northern hemisphere influenza vaccination in Hong Kong:

- Pregnant women
- Elderly persons living in residential care homes
- Long-stay residents of institutions for the Persons with Disabilities
- Persons aged 50 years or above
- Persons with chronic medical problems¹
- Health care workers
- Children aged 6 months to less than 6 years
- Poultry workers
- Pig farmers and pig-slaughtering industry personnel


Given influenza vaccines are safe and effective, influenza vaccination is suitable for personal protection for all people except those with known contraindications. Members of the public can consult their family doctors for details and arrangement.

Yes. The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases recommends that persons who have already been vaccinated with the 2015 Southern hemisphere seasonal influenza vaccine should receive the 2015/16 Northern hemisphere influenza vaccine, preferably with an interval of at least 4 weeks.



Who should not receive inactivated seasonal influenza vaccine?

People who are allergic to a previous dose of inactivated influenza vaccine or other vaccine components are not suitable to have inactivated influenza vaccination. Individuals with mild egg allergy who are considering an influenza vaccination can be given inactivated influenza vaccine in primary care. For those with diagnosed or suspected severe egg allergy, they should be seen by an allergist or immunologist for evaluation of egg allergy and for administration of inactivated influenza vaccine if clinically indicated. Those with bleeding disorders or on anticoagulants should consult their doctors for advice. If a person suffers from fever on the day of vaccination, the vaccination should be deferred till recovery.



Is inactivated seasonal influenza vaccine safe?

What are the possible side effects?

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 and joint pain, and tiredness beginning 6 – 12 hours after vaccination and lasting up to 2 days. If fever or discomforts persist, please consult your doctor. Immediate severe allergic reactions like hives, swelling of the lips or tongue, and difficulties in breathing are rare and require emergency medical attention.

Influenza vaccination may rarely be followed by serious adverse events such as Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) (1 - 2 case per 1 million vaccinees), inflammation of brain membranes or brain disease (1 in 3 million doses distributed) and severe allergic reaction (9 in 10 million doses distributed). However, influenza vaccination may not necessarily have causal relations with these adverse events.

Does influenza vaccine

work right away?

No. It takes about 2 weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. Get vaccinated early to ensure protection.

2 weeks



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

Yes. The circulating influenza strains change from time to time. In accordance with the circulating strains, the vaccine composition is updated every year to enhance protection. The immunity built up in a vaccinated person in previous season will decrease over time and may become too low to provide protection in next season. In addition, the vaccine compositions of 2015/16 influenza vaccine are different from those in 2014/15, it is important to get vaccinated.

How to choose the trivalent or quadrivalent vaccine?

What is the difference in protection between them?

Both trivalent and quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccines are recommended 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. Please consult your doctor for details.



How much **protection** does the vaccine provide?

According to the WHO, when the vaccine strains closely match the circulating influenza viruses, efficacy of inactivated influenza vaccine in individuals younger than 65 years of age typically ranges from 70% – 90%. For prevention against influenza, vaccinated individuals should also observe good personal and environmental hygiene, maintain balanced diet, exercise regularly, have adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption.

Where can I get free / subsidised vaccination?

Children

Starting in October⁴ 2015, children aged 6 months to less than 6 years can receive subsidised vaccination from private doctors enrolled in the Childhood Influenza Vaccination Subsidy Scheme.

From October/November⁴ 2015 onwards, eligible children receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or holding valid Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges² can receive free vaccination at the Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) of the Department of Health under the Government Vaccination Programme (GVP).

Pregnant women, persons aged below 50 with chronic medical problems and persons aged 50 to less than 65

From October/November⁴ 2015 onwards, pregnant women, persons aged below 50 with chronic medical problems¹ attending public clinics or persons aged 50 to less than 65³, who are receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance or holding valid Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges² can receive free vaccination through designated public clinics under the GVP.

Elderly persons aged 65 or above

Starting in October⁴ 2015, persons aged 65³ or above can receive subsidised influenza vaccination from private doctors enrolled in the Elderly Vaccination Subsidy Scheme.

From October/November⁴ 2015 onwards, elderly persons can receive free vaccination through designated public clinics under the GVP.



Centre for Health Protection website

www.chp.gov.hk



24-Hour Health Education Hotline of the Department of Health

2833 0111

Enquiry

2125 2125

¹ People with chronic medical problems mainly refer to those who have chronic cardiovascular (except hypertension without complication), lung, metabolic or kidney diseases, obesity (BMI 30 or above); who are immunocompromised (those with a weakened immune system due to disease (such as HIV/AIDS) or treatment (such as cancer treatment)), children and adolescents (aged 6 months to 18 years) on long-term aspirin therapy; and those with chronic neurological condition that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions or that can increase the risk for aspiration or those who lack the ability to care for themselves.

² The above holders of valid Certificate for Waiver of Medical Charges must be Hong Kong residents.

³ For elderly persons who become 65 years old in 2016, they can get vaccination subsidy under the Elderly Vaccination Subsidy Scheme starting in January 2016.

⁴ Please take note of the government's announcement.