

**For discussion
on 14 March 2025**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services
Updates on Human Papillomavirus Vaccination Catch-up Programme**

Purpose

This paper outlines the latest developments on the implementation of the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Catch-up Programme by the Government.

Background

2. Cervical cancer is one of the top ten most common and deadly cancers among women in Hong Kong. Almost all cervical cancers are caused by persistent infection with high-risk types of HPV. The HPV vaccine is very effective in preventing the high-risk HPV types that most commonly cause cervical cancer. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends all places to introduce HPV vaccine and administer it to girls aged between 9 and 14 before their sexual debut. It also recommends mop-up vaccination be provided to girls aged between 9 and 18 (including girls and older girls missing the vaccination before) so as to reduce their chance of having cervical cancer.

3. In response to the WHO's recommendation, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) launched an HPV vaccination programme to Primary Five and Primary Six school girls under the Hong Kong Childhood Immunisation Programme (HKCIP) since the 2019/20 school year. The first dose of HPV vaccine is given via outreach by the DH's School Immunisation Teams (SIT) to eligible Primary Five female students at their schools, and a second dose is given to the girls when they reach Primary Six in the following school year. If students miss the vaccination in schools, SIT sub-office and Student Health Service Centre can provide mop-up vaccination.

4. HPV vaccine has been included in the HKCIP. In the four school years since the vaccination began, a total of about 97 600 girls have completed two doses of HPV vaccination, accounting for about 90% of eligible girls (detailed figures are tabulated below), which is significantly higher than the interim target coverage (70 %) for completion of two doses of HPV vaccination as stated in the Hong Kong Cancer Strategy 2019. As a routine vaccination, it is expected that

HPV vaccine would gradually achieve and maintain a very high vaccination rate, like other vaccines under the HKCIP (e.g. hepatitis B, measles and pneumococcal vaccines), and greatly reduce the chance of Hong Kong female suffering from cervical cancer.

	2020/21 school year	2021/22 school year	2022/23 school year	2023/24 school year
No. of persons vaccinated	23 595	23 573	24 779	25 690
Size of eligible population	27 408	26 408	26 962	27 937
Coverage rate	86%	89%	92%	92%

5. In 2022, the WHO further recommended the provision of catch-up vaccinations to girls aged between 9 and 18. The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases under the CHP also agreed earlier to expand the target group of HPV vaccinations to older girls aged 18 or below. Taking into account the scientific evidence, the Government decided to launch a one-off HPV Vaccination Catch-up Programme by phases starting from 2 December 2024, for female Hong Kong residents who were born in 2004 or after, and have not been covered by the HKCIP (i.e. girls aged 18 or below as in 2022, and not being covered by existing programme) to receive free HPV vaccination, providing protection for the remaining group of older girls (estimated to be around 190 000). Each eligible person can receive two doses of free vaccination, while immunocompromised persons have to receive three doses of vaccination (all three doses are free of charge). The Programme will be implemented in three phases and last for about two years.

6. Eligible persons joining this Programme must register with eHealth. After registered with eHealth, the participants and their families or care-takers can learn about the Programme and vaccination records of other Government Vaccination Programmes anytime through the mobile application of eHealth.

The First Phase of the Programme

7. The first phase of the Programme commenced on 2 December 2024. Targeted recipients are eligible full-time female students studying in Hong Kong secondary schools (including secondary sections of special schools). The estimated number of eligible secondary school students is around 56 000. Schools can engage participating outreach private vaccination teams to provide free HPV vaccination service to eligible female students at schools. The CHP would provide free vaccines for the outreach vaccinations along with a subsidy

of \$105 per dose to doctors. If eligible female students miss the outreach vaccination activities at their schools, SIT sub-office and Student Health Service Centre under the DH can provide mop-up vaccination. SIT would also provide outreach vaccination services to schools in remote area or those that could not identify an appropriate private doctor to provide the outreach vaccination activity. The two doses of HPV vaccine should be given 5 to 13 months apart. If a Secondary Six female student received the first dose of the vaccine at school and has graduated by the time she is due for the second dose, she can receive the second dose at her post-secondary institution or university in the second phase of the Programme; or receive the second dose in the third phase.

Efforts of the DH and the Education Bureau in enhancing school participation rate

8. The Government strongly urges schools to join the Programme, which can provide convenience to the parents on one hand; and on the other hand reduce the financial expenditure of parents who would otherwise have to self-finance their daughters to receive HPV vaccination at other venues/clinics. The DH and the Education Bureau (EDB) have been actively assisting schools in organising outreach vaccination activities. Works that have been carried out and are being planned include –

- (i) in October 2024, the CHP issued a letter through the EDB to all secondary schools in Hong Kong to invite them to join the first phase of the Programme;
- (ii) in November 2024, an online briefing had been arranged by the CHP detailing the Programme to schools and answering their queries concerning the Programme;
- (iii) in November 2024, a media interview was held and a press release was issued by the CHP announcing the Programme. Promotion through social media had also been conducted;
- (iv) since the launch of the first phase of the Programme in December 2024, the CHP has been contacting schools that have not yet participated in the Programme individually to understand their difficulties and provide necessary assistance to facilitate their participation in the Programme;
- (v) in December 2024 and January 2025, the CHP has once again sent emails to those schools which had not replied and reminded them to sign up for the Programme as soon as possible. The EDB also

worked with the CHP in promoting the Programme. The relevant letters/messages have been sent to concerned schools to facilitate schools to understand the details of the Programme and actively participate in promoting students to get vaccinated so as to prevent the related diseases;

- (vi) the CHP referred the list of schools that refused to participate in the Programme and those that have not yet replied to the EDB to facilitate the EDB in contacting schools concerned and appealing them to actively participate. The EDB has contacted schools again in late February 2025 to understand their participation situation; and
- (vii) on 5 March 2025, with the assistance from the EDB, the CHP sent a letter to parents through schools to further explain to parents the details of the Programme and remind parents that this is a one-off catch-up vaccination activity. Eligible female students who do not participate in the Programme can only be vaccinated at their own expense in private clinics in the future. The cost of vaccination may exceed \$1,200 per dose. A webinar will be held on 19 March for parents to learn more about HPV vaccine. In addition, the DH is producing a series of video clips on HPV vaccine, which will be disseminated through social media to enhance students' understanding of HPV vaccine and appeal their active participation in the Programme.

Latest developments

9. As at 4 March 2025, about 500 secondary schools had responded or indicated to the CHP that they would enroll for the Programme (about 95% of eligible schools; schools without eligible female students of the appropriate age are not counted). Around 250 doctors had enrolled in the Programme.

10. As at 2 March 2025, 203 schools had arranged or completed the first dose HPV vaccination outreach activities. These schools had about 16 200 Secondary Five or above female students, with around 10 500 doses administered. The coverage rate of the first dose of HPV vaccine was about 76%.¹

¹ The aforementioned 10 500 doses of vaccine include the first or second dose of HPV vaccine for the female students involved; the 76% coverage rate of the first dose of HPV vaccine includes the female students who received their first dose of vaccine in this catch-up vaccination programme and the female students who indicated that they had received the first dose of vaccine on their own, which is about 12 400 students.

11. After the deadline for reply from schools (i.e. 31 March 2025), schools that will not arrange outreach vaccination activities will be requested by the DH to issue a notice to inform parents about the schools' arrangement. A list of those non-participating schools will be uploaded to the CHP's webpage so that parents of relevant schools could arrange their daughters to receive mop-up vaccination at a SIT sub-office or a Student Health Services Centre under the DH.

The Second Phase of the Programme

12. The second phase of the Programme will commence in March 2025. Targeted recipients are female Hong Kong residents studying in local post-secondary institutions or universities who were born between 2004 and 2008, with estimated number of eligible persons of around 65 300. Participating institutions could choose to provide catch-up vaccination services to eligible female students at their healthcare services clinics or arrange outreach teams to provide service on campus. The CHP would provide free vaccine along with subsidies to doctors.

13. The CHP had sent letter to post-secondary institutions or universities on 6 December 2024, inviting them to join the Programme. As at 2 March 2025, 34 post-secondary institutions and universities (around 70%) had enrolled in the Programme. Some of these institutions will commence catch-up vaccination activities in March 2025. The CHP is actively following up with institutions that have not yet responded, calling on them to participate in the Programme and providing necessary assistance.

The Third Phase of the Programme

14. The third phase of the Programme will start in the first half of 2025. Targeted recipients are female Hong Kong residents born between 2004 and 2008 who have already completed their studies in Hong Kong. The estimated number of eligible persons is around 70 600. The third phase will also cover the rest of female Hong Kong residents born between 2004 and 2008 who have not yet completed their HPV vaccination. The CHP together with the Primary Healthcare Commission is finalising the arrangement of the third phase, which will be announced in due course.

Advice Sought

15. Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

**Health Bureau
Education Bureau
Department of Health
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