

[English version]

7 September 2022

Joint statement from the Hong Kong College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians

Children and young people can achieve healthy growth and development only when provided with a socially rich and safe environment. While COVID-19 vaccination rates are relatively high amongst children and adolescents >11 years of age, the situation amongst young children and infants is still unsatisfactory. Our community can resume normal activities safely only if vaccination rates of our whole population can be increased.

As of 29 August 2022, of children under the age of three years, reported cases of COVID-19 have exceeded 14% (>17,500 cases) since 31 December 2021 and approximately 2.5% (>3000) of all children under the age of three years have been admitted to hospital because of COVID-19 (<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/>). This reflects a dramatic rise in infections serious enough to warrant hospitalisation amongst unvaccinated children. Currently in Hong Kong, the risks posed by COVID-19 infection far exceed any potential complications associated with COVID-19 vaccines.

Recently, after detailed review of vaccine efficacy and safety data, the Joint Scientific Committees of the CHP and Chief Executive's Expert Advisory Panel recommended lowering the age limit for COVID-19 vaccination to 6 months of age. Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that vaccination of pregnant mothers can be 61% effective in reducing risk of COVID-19-associated hospitalisations in infants < 6 months old (Halasa et al. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2022;71:264-270). Thus, in combination with vaccination of pregnant and lactating women, the lowered age limit provides a continuum of protection to our infants and young children.

The Hong Kong College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Hong Kong College of Paediatricians strongly support the vaccination of pregnant and lactating women to offer protection to themselves and their babies. Babies and children over the age of 6 months should also promptly receive the immunization against COVID-19. With the cooler season approaching, it is imperative that we take action now.

[中文版本]

2022 年 9 月 7 日

香港婦產科學院及香港兒科醫學院聯合聲明

兒童和青少年需要在安全並且有正常社交活動的環境下才能健康地成長和發展。雖然新冠疫苗接種率在 11 歲以上的兒童和青少年中相對較高，但幼兒和嬰兒的情況仍然偏低。只有提高整體疫苗接種率，我們才能恢復正常活動。

從 2021 年 12 月 31 日到 2022 年 8 月 29 日，在所有三歲以下兒童中，累計呈報新冠病毒感染病例已超過 14% (>17,500 個案)，而大約 2.5% (>3,000 個案) 的三歲以下兒童已因新冠病毒感染而需住院(<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/>)。這反映未接種疫苗而受感染的兒童住院人數急劇增加。目前在香港，感染新冠病毒帶來的風險遠遠超過與新冠疫苗疫苗相關的潛在併發症。

最近，衛生防護中心聯合科學委員會和行政長官專家諮詢小組對新冠疫苗功效和安全性的科學數據進行詳細審查後，建議將新冠疫苗接種的年齡下限降低到 6 個月。此外，有證據表明，孕婦接種疫苗可有效降低 6 個月以下嬰兒與新冠病毒相關的住院風險 (Halasa et al. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2022;71:264-270)。因此結合懷孕或哺乳期的婦女接種疫苗，將可以為嬰幼兒提供持續的保護。

香港婦產科學院及香港兒科醫學院建議所有懷孕或哺乳期的婦女接種疫苗，以保護自己和嬰兒。6 個月以上的嬰兒和兒童也應及時接種新冠疫苗。隨著秋、冬季的來臨，我們必須立即採取行動。