

Hong Kong to vaccinate 3-year-olds amid new COVID-19 surge

February 14 2022



Residents queue up to get tested for the coronavirus at a temporary testing center for COVID-19 in Hong Kong, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022. Hong Kong residents expressed growing frustration last week after new, tighter coronavirus restrictions went into effect, imposed by city leaders in line with Beijing's zero-COVID policy. Credit: AP Photo/Vincent Yu

Hong Kong plans to offer COVID-19 vaccines to children as young as 3 as infections rage through the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

The announcement late Sunday came ahead of another surge in cases. The city reported a record 2,071 new cases on Monday, with that number expected to double the next day with more than 4,500 preliminary positives identified.

Hong Kong schools extended a suspension of in-class teaching for two weeks to March 6,

The wave blamed on the omicron variant has already prompted new restrictions limiting in-person gatherings to no more than two households. Hong Kong residents have been rushing to grocery stores to stock up on vegetables and to hair salons to get haircuts.

Authorities have imposed lockdowns on residential buildings wherever clusters of infections are identified, and have already banned public dining after 6 p.m. Only vaccinated people will be permitted in shopping malls and supermarkets, while places of worship, hair salons and other businesses have been ordered to close.

Immunizations using Chinese maker Sinovac's vaccine for children aged 3 and above will start being administered on Tuesday. Previously, the age limit was 5 years old. Hong Kong has fully vaccinated 73% of its eligible population, not including children.



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With a population of about 7.5 million, Hong Kong currently has more than 7,000 people being treated for COVID-19 or awaiting admission to hospitals.

Hong Kong has adopted mainland China's "zero tolerance" approach to dealing with the pandemic that requires quarantines, mask mandates, case tracing and lockdowns of buildings, neighborhoods and entire cities, even when only a few cases are detected.

Beijing officials and Chinese state media say adopting a "living with the

virus" policy as some countries have done would overwhelm Hong Kong's medical system.

The city has as recorded more than 25,000 COVID-19 cases and about 220 deaths from the virus.

The story has been corrected to say that the vaccine approved for children aged 3 and above is Sinovac, not Sinopharm, and that the announcement was made late Sunday, not Monday.

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Citation: Hong Kong to vaccinate 3-year-olds amid new COVID-19 surge (2022, February 14) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-02-hong-kong-vaccinate-year-olds-covid-.html>

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