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Taiwan halts 2nd-dose BioNTech vaccinations for ages 12-17 amid concerns of myocarditis

CECC says approval of COVID vaccines for children under 12 will not be considered until 2nd dose issue settled

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By George Liao, Taiwan News, Staff Writer

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(CNA photo)

TAIPEI (Taiwan News) — Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) head Chen Shih-chung (陳時中) said on Wednesday (Nov. 10) that a panel of experts has decided to suspend administering second doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech (BNT) COVID vaccine to children 12-17 years old amid concerns it may increase the risk of myocarditis.

Cases of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the outer lining of the heart) have been reported after BNT vaccination of children between 12 and 17 years of age. According to U.S. statistics, the risk of youths experiencing myocarditis after receiving the second BNT dose is 10 times higher than after the first dose, CNA reported.

Some countries have adjusted their policies regarding administering COVID-19 vaccines to adolescents. For instance, Hong Kong has changed from two doses of BNT to only a single dose for those aged 12-17. The U.K. has done something similar, recommending only one shot for children between 12 and 18 years of age, per CNA.

Chen said that the Ministry of Health and Welfare's Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) has decided to halt administration of second BNT doses to this age group for two weeks, during which time experts and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) physicians will look at the 16 cases of myocarditis among adolescents after BNT vaccination before making a final decision on whether to go ahead with the second shot.

International data will also be consulted before the final decision is made, the CECC head said, adding that currently, children between the ages of 12-17 are being vaccinated with two doses worldwide except in Hong Kong and the U.K.

As for whether COVID-19 vaccines will be approved for children aged 5-11, Chen said the matter will not be considered until the second dose issue with 12 to 17-year-olds is settled.



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