

Omicron: Senior citizens urged to take booster shots for optimal protection

By Bernama - April 16, 2022 @ 9:45pm



Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin speaks to reporters after visiting Sultanah Nur Zahirah Hospital (HSNZ) in Kuala Nerus. -NSTP/GHAZALI KORI

KUALA TERENGGANU: The Covid-19 Omicron variant is still considered a serious threat, especially for high-risk groups.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said therefore, optimal protection should be given especially to the elderly, chronic patients with high blood pressure and diabetes and those with immune system problems.

"For some Omicron is like the common cold but for others, it could be serious which can bring harm.

"So for the (groups) I mentioned earlier, it is highly recommended to take a booster dose (Covid-19 vaccine) because if infected with Omicron, the effects and symptoms can be severe to the group," he said during a visit to Sultanah Nur Zahirah Hospital (HSNZ) here, today.

He said this when asked about the possible spike in Covid-19 infections following the expected exodus of Malaysians during the Aidilfitri celebrations soon.

Khairy, who did not rule out such possibility said efforts to increase the percentage of booster doses, especially among the elderly, needed to be stepped up and his office would instruct the state health directors to do so before the celebrations.

"The government has assured that Malaysian families can return to their hometowns with no restrictions to celebrate Aidilfitri. The Ministry (Health) is satisfied with the trend of infection. Hospitals are not under pressure in terms of admission to intensive care units.

"But it's better to give protection to the elderly since their children who are returning home might bring the virus with them. So it's better for the parents to take a booster dose at a nearby clinic," he said.

He said unlike children, whose deadline for the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine under the Covid-19 National Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) was set for May 15, there was no closing date for the booster dose.

Meanwhile, Khairy said if the number of infections increased during Aidilfitri, the ministry was ready to provide treatment to individuals with severe symptoms.

"I am urging senior citizens to get a booster dose. The vaccines have an expiry date, they can not be stored for too long, they will be wasted if not used," he said.

According to him, the overall percentage of booster dose intake among adults is 70 per cent thus far, while for the elderly is 77 per cent.

"I hope it can reach 90 per cent (senior citizens). It is very important to protect senior citizens," he said. -- Bernama