



Immunisation news

The flu vaccine ordering season for the winter of 2014/15 is already upon us, so we are using this month's issue to update readers on who will be eligible for the flu vaccine later in the year when the vaccination programme starts (see also, the shingles vaccine article in the Vaccine supply section).

New cohorts for the flu vaccination for 2014/15

Next winter sees the addition of two more age groups of children to those introduced in winter 2013/14. These are planned for eligible four-year-olds, and in several pilot programmes around the country to 11- to 13-year-olds in school years 7 and 8.

GP practices should note that flu vaccine will be provided centrally for all children in the extended programme, and those of all ages in clinical risk groups, up to and including those aged 17 years.

Week of health protection action for nurses, midwives and other healthcare professionals

The Department of Health and Public Health England nursing teams will be undertaking a 'week of action' on health protection between 24 and 28 February with the aim of engaging, enlightening and encouraging nurses, midwives and the wider healthcare community on this key issue through the medium of social media and more traditional media formats. There will be a daily focus on a specific theme, one of which will be immunisation.

As well as a series of daily blogs by national leaders to stimulate interest and discussion, there will be a number of media articles, career profiles and case studies, key facts delivered in a digestible format and a chance to interact through webinars and twitter chats. Further specific details will appear shortly via Viv Bennett's blog page at [web link 1](#) or via Twitter [@VivJBennett](#).

Monthly myth buster

Can my baby's immune system cope with all these vaccines given at once?

With thanks to those who responded to our request in January's issue, this month's myth is that children's immune systems cannot cope with several vaccines all at once. This was a common theoretical concern at the height of the MMR scare, giving three vaccines in one go rather than singly, but it has never been substantiated. Indeed, research showed that children's systems could cope easily with far more vaccines than would ever be administered at any one time. Dr Helen Bedford's article at [web link 2](#) provides very useful information on how to answer most parents' questions on the subject and [web link 3](#) gives more specific details on how vaccines work.

Vaccine wastage

Ordering vaccines – 'little and often' is the key to efficiency

As explained in last month's issue, some vaccine wastage is inevitable because it has gone past its expiry date and not as much of it has been used as anticipated, which itself can be caused by a variety of uncontrollable factors.

However, it is possible to reduce the chances of this happening by only ordering sufficient vaccine for your immediate needs. Vaccines can be ordered on a weekly basis, so there's no need to stockpile and fill up your fridge, as this may potentially deprive others of getting their vaccines and increases the risk of the vaccines going past their expiry dates. And if your fridge is stacked with vaccines and you have a power failure the cost of the wastage can be considerable.

Accurate record-keeping cuts costs

As this year's flu vaccine-ordering time is already upon us, it's particularly important that GPs have an accurate record of how many eligible patients they have on their books in order to reach the World Health Organization benchmark vaccine uptake levels. This is not only for their own benefit for those flu vaccines they order direct from the manufacturers but also for Public Health England's (i.e. the taxpayers') for the children's flu vaccines supplied centrally.

Vaccine supply

Shingles vaccination – first year and reminder about expiry dates

The first year of the shingles vaccination programme ends on 31 August 2014. GPs can therefore continue to offer and vaccinate all those aged 70 or 79 on 1 September 2013, until this date (see [web link 4](#)). Public Health England has distributed a large volume of the shingles vaccine, Zostavax, across the NHS and practices should continue to check how much stock they hold before ordering more. It is recommended that practices hold no more than two weeks' worth of stock (see Vaccine wastage above).

Please note that the expiry date of some of the earliest distributed stock is 30 September 2014, however it is likely that this has already been used. Subsequent batches of distributed stock have expiry dates ranging between October 2014 and April 2015. If excess stock has been ordered and if it continues to be stored correctly, this can be used in the second year of the programme which will start on 1 September 2014.

Please note that centrally supplied Zostavax is for the national programme only.

Typhoid vaccine

Typhim Vi

Sanofi Pasteur MSD currently has limited stock of their typhoid vaccine, Typhim Vi and supply restrictions are likely to continue until May.

Alternative vaccines Typherix and Hepatyrix (combined hepatitis A and typhoid vaccine) manufactured by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) continue to remain unavailable until Q4 2014.

Vivotif is currently available to order from Janssen-Cilag Ltd. Orders can be placed on 0844 800 3907.

Viper anti-venom Lot No. 188, expiring at the end April

European viper venom antitoxin from Lot No. 188, will expire on 30 April 2014. This antitoxin can be used up until the expiry date and stocks are available to replace any antitoxin that needs to be disposed of in May.

Use of vaccines in outbreaks of meningococcal disease

There are now several vaccines which may be recommended for use in outbreaks of meningococcal disease. For cases due to serogroup B the only available vaccine is the newly licensed 4CMenB (Bexsero). For outbreaks of serogroup A, W, or Y then two quadrivalent meningococcal vaccines are licensed (Menveo and Nimenrix). Where stock is required for outbreaks, an order should be placed directly with the manufacturer Novartis (tel: 0845 745 1500) or GSK

(tel: 0808 100 9997). For outbreaks due to serogroup C then any of the conjugate meningococcal serogroup C vaccines (Meningitec, Menjugate and NeisVac-C) are suitable.

There is a small supply of Bexsero and Menveo available at PHE Colindale for out of hours situations. To access this supply contact PHE Colindale on 0208 327 7471 and also email vaccinesupply@phe.gov.uk. Any orders for this emergency stock will be recharged and you will need to supply details of who will pay for the vaccine when you contact us.

NeisVac-C for infants and the adolescent booster

From March, NeisVac-C is the MenC vaccine available through the ImmForm website for the infant and adolescent booster vaccination programmes. It is expected that small quantities of Meningitec and Menjugate Kit vaccines will still be in circulation for some time and these should be used up first for the adolescent programme wherever possible, before switching to NeisVac-C.

Contacts

A reminder that you can contact Vaccine update directly, at vaccineupdate@phe.gov.uk

You can also contact Public Health England regarding more general enquiries at enquiries@phe.gov.uk

Vaccine supply queries should be addressed to the link at the foot of the page.

Web links

web link 1 <http://vivbennett.dh.gov.uk/>

web link 2 <http://www.gosh.nhs.uk/parents-and-visitors/general-health-advice/immunisation/frequently-asked-questions/#Multiple-vaccines-at-once>

web link 3 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunity-and-how-vaccines-work-the-green-book-chapter-1>

web link 4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-shingles-vaccine-for-people-aged-70-and-79-years>