

Date: 7 August 2017

Dear colleague

Re: Shortage of adult Hepatitis B vaccine

There is a global shortage of hepatitis B vaccine which is currently impacting severely on the UK supply. The situation is particularly critical during August but there is likely to still be some limitations on supply until early 2018.

To ensure that stock is available for those individuals at highest and most immediate risk of exposure to hepatitis B, Public Health England (PHE) in consultation with colleagues from devolved administrations have developed temporary recommendations to support clinicians undertaking an individual risk assessment (see links below).

PHE and Department of Health (DH) have also been working with both manufacturers of UK licensed hepatitis B vaccine to institute ordering restrictions according to customer type. The allocation is based on an agreed assessment of the proportion of vaccines used by those customers for individuals in the highest priority groups. As a consequence, some services may not be able to order any stock and others will have limits applied to their orders. A mechanism will be in place to allow for exceptional orders if an individual risk assessment indicates an urgent need. Individuals for whom pre-exposure vaccination is deferred should be offered advice on how to minimise risk of exposure, and on the action to take if a significant exposure occurs. Sexual health and travel clinics, in particular, should offer advice on risk reduction. The TRAVAX and Fit for Travel websites provide advice for travellers (see links below).

To sustain supply for those at greatest need, hospitals and clinics should ensure that:

- clinicians are aware of the temporary recommendations on prioritising vaccines
- only essential vaccine stock is ordered and stockpiling must be avoided
- stock usage is coordinated and monitored across the service to ensure that scarce stock is being used responsibly
- alternative products including combined hepatitis A and B vaccines, and other presentations (e.g. multi-dose packs) are used (see Table 3 in the temporary recommendations document)

It has been agreed with the BMA's UK General Practice Committee that general practice will not be able to order any adult hepatitis B vaccine stock until further notice. NHS Board Vaccine Holding Centres will still be able to order hepatitis B vaccine for high priority patients as detailed in the temporary recommendations (see Table 1).

Supply for paediatric vaccine has been protected to ensure that the programme for vaccinating infants born to hepatitis B infected mothers can continue. There should be no delay in providing vaccines to these children.



Chair
Chief Executive
Associate Director

Professor Elizabeth Ireland
Colin Sinclair
Kate Harley

*NHS National Services Scotland is the common name of the
Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service*

The hexavalent vaccine (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB) due to be used in the routine childhood immunisation programme from late September is not affected by these supply constraints.

The situation is under constant review, to help sustain supply for the rest of the year. We will keep you updated with any further developments.

Yours sincerely



Dr Syed Ahmed
Clinical Director, HPS

PHE Hepatitis B vaccination in adults and children: temporary recommendations

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints>

The Green Book: Immunisation against Infectious Disease

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book> chapter 18 (hepatitis B)

TRAVAX

<http://www.travax.nhs.uk/Fit for Travel>

Fit for Travel

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>

Communication:

NHS Boards are requested to cascade this alert to: GPs, community pharmacists, hospital pharmacists, nurses and A&E staff, occupational health teams, sexual health clinics, travel health clinics and others as appropriate for action.

Copied to:

NHS Health Protection Teams

NHS Board Medical Directors

Directors of Public Health

Directors of Pharmacy

NHS 24

SG Policy Team

HPS File Note