



Dear Colleague

DETAILS OF THE SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER) VACCINATION PROGRAMME 2019/20

1. We are writing to provide information on the 2019/20 shingles vaccination programme which will run from 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020.

Background

2. The shingles vaccination programme was introduced in Scotland in 2013. Each year since then has involved routine vaccination of people aged 70 and a year by year catch up for those aged 71-79. The final catch up group was offered the shingles vaccine in 2018/19.

2019/20 Programme

3. This year, eligibility for the 2019/20 programme is as follows:
 - Routine vaccination of 70 year olds (defined by the patient's age at 1 September 2019)
 - Opportunistic vaccination of 71–79 year olds who have not previously been vaccinated (defined by patients age at 1 September 2019).
 - Vaccine should not be offered to anyone aged 80 and over, even if they have previously been eligible.

Live vaccine

4. **Zostavax® contains a live, attenuated virus** derived from the Oka/Merck strain of varicella zoster virus. **This vaccine is contraindicated in some patients (eg immunosuppressed).**

Administration

5. **The vaccine must not be given intravascularly.** The Zostavax® vaccine can be administered by intramuscular (IM) or subcutaneous (SC) injection, preferably in the deltoid region of the upper arm. Intramuscular injection is the preferred route of administration, as injection-site adverse reactions were significantly less frequent in those who received the vaccine via this route of administration. For individuals with a bleeding disorder, Zostavax should be given by deep subcutaneous injection to reduce the risk of bleeding.

From the Chief Medical Officer
Chief Nursing Officer
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Dr Catherine Calderwood
Professor Fiona McQueen
Dr Rose Marie Parr

26 August 2019

SGHD/CMO(2019) 9

For action

General Practitioners
Practice Nurses
Primary Care Leads, NHS Boards
NHS Board Immunisation Coordinators
NHS Board Medical Directors
Nurse Directors, NHS Boards
Directors of Public Health
Infectious Disease Consultants
CPHMs

For information

NHS Board Chief Executives
Directors of Pharmacy
Consultant Physicians
Health Protection Scotland
Chief Executive, NHS Health Scotland
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Scottish General Practitioners Committee

Further Enquiries

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Screening tool for contraindications to shingles vaccine

6. To support the shingles vaccination programme, an easy to use screening tool has been created for use by healthcare practitioners to help determine eligibility and screen for contraindications. This can be accessed at:
<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/screening-tool-for-contraindications-for-shingles-vaccine/>

Immunisation against Infectious Disease (The Green Book)

7. The shingles chapter (chapter 28a) within Immunisation against Infectious Disease (The Green Book) can be found at:
[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shingles-herpes-zoster-the-green-book-chapter-28a.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shingles-herpes-zoster-the-green-book-chapter-28a)

Uptake rates in 2018/19

8. It is important that every effort is made to ensure uptake is as high as possible. The benefits of shingles vaccine should be communicated and vaccination made as easily accessible as possible for those eligible.
9. The cumulative uptake in Scotland for the 2018/19 programme (September to June inclusive) are:
 - 40.1% for the age 70 cohort (compared to 43.3% in same time period 2017/18)
 - 38.4% for the age 76 cohort (compared to 38.6% in same time period 2017/18)

Action

10. GP Practices are asked to note the contents of this letter, and to take action as necessary, to support and implement this important vaccination programme.
11. **Annex A** to this letter provides additional details about the shingles vaccination programme. **Annex B** contains communication materials for patients and education resources for registered healthcare practitioners.
12. Thank you to you and your practice staff for your continued support in ensuring vulnerable individuals are protected against this painful disease.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Calderwood

Fiona McQueen

Rose Marie Parr

Chief Medical Officer

Chief Nursing Officer

Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Annex A

2019/20 SHINGLES (HERPES ZOSTER) VACCINATION PROGRAMME

Eligibility

13. Vaccination should be routinely offered to people aged 70 years and opportunistically offered to those aged 71-79 years not previously vaccinated with Zostavax®. This is defined by the patient's age on 1st September 2019.
14. Vaccine should not be offered to anyone aged 80 and over, even if they have previously been eligible.
15. NHS Boards and GP practices are reminded of their responsibilities in the vaccination of eligible persons who are housebound and those in care homes and long-term hospital care.
16. Vaccination can be administered at any time of the year – it does not need to be given at the same time as the seasonal flu vaccination. If GP practices decide to offer the shingles vaccine at the same time as the flu vaccine, please be aware that the contraindications for the two vaccines are different.

Vaccine supply

17. Central vaccine supply of Zostavax® must only be used for those in the eligible cohorts.

Call and recall

18. There will be no centralised letter for the shingles vaccination programme, however, the 2019 seasonal flu letter will include a short reference for those aged 70-79 highlighting their eligibility for the shingles vaccine. Patients should be directed to <https://www.nhsinform.scot/shingles> for further information about the vaccine and eligibility.
19. We continue to encourage all GP practices to put in place call and recall arrangements by way of a letter. A template letter will be available from 1 September 2019 to help with this (see <http://www.healthscotland.com/shingles>). Leaflets will also be provided to GP practices to accompany these letters from week commencing 24 September 2019.

Vaccine usage

20. Full details on use, dosage, administration, concomitant administration with other vaccines, contraindications, consent and reporting of adverse reactions with Zostavax® is set out in chapter 28a of the Green Book. This is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shingles-herpes-zoster-the-green-book-chapter-28a>.

Patient Group Direction (PGD)

21. A national specimen Patient Group Direction (PGD) for administration of Zostavax® is available on the Health Protection Scotland website at: <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/publications/patient-group-directions/>

22. Supply

Zostavax® should be ordered through NHS vaccine holding centres. GP practices and vaccine holding centres must liaise closely to ensure sufficient vaccine is available prior to the scheduling of vaccination appointments. GP practices should ensure that stock with the shortest expiry date is used first to preserve vaccine supplies.

Storage

23. Vaccines should be stored in the original packaging at +2°C to +8°C and protected from light. All vaccines may be sensitive to some extent to heat and cold. Heat speeds up the decline in potency of most vaccines, thus reducing their shelf life. Do not freeze. Freezing may cause increased reactogenicity and loss of potency for some vaccines. It can also cause hairline cracks in the container, leading to contamination of the contents.

Vaccine stock management

24. Please ensure sufficient fridge space is available for the vaccine. Each site holding vaccine is asked to review current stocks of all vaccines. No more than 2 to 4 weeks of stock is recommended, and higher stock levels should be reduced to this level. A review of available fridge space will be necessary to ensure adequate storage capacity at the start of the programme.

25. Effective management of vaccines throughout the supply chain is essential to reduce vaccine wastage, including the use of appropriate cool boxes/bags for transporting the vaccine during home/care home visits. Local protocols should be in place to keep vaccine wastage to a minimum. Even small percentage reductions in vaccine wastage have a major impact on the financing of vaccine supplies.

Reporting of adverse reactions

26. Suspected adverse drug reactions (ADR) to vaccines should be reported via the Yellow Card Scheme (www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard). Chapter 9 of the Green Book gives detailed guidance about which ADRs to report and how to do so. Additionally, Chapter 8 of the Green Book provides detailed advice on managing adverse events following vaccination. Information on the side effects of Zostavax® is available in Chapter 28a of the Green Book. These chapters are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/series/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book>.

GP contractual arrangements

27. For information on payments associated with the shingles vaccination programme please refer to the forthcoming circular from Primary Care Division, Scottish Government.

COMMUNICATIONS - INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS AND EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR REGISTERED HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS

Communication materials for patients

28. Information leaflets and posters will be made available to GP practices to support this vaccination programme to help inform the general public. The supply of public facing materials will start arriving at GP practices the week commencing 24 September 2019.
29. These materials, along with a template shingles invitation letter and screensaver (to display on GP practice screens), will be available to download online from 1 September 2019 at www.healthscotland.com/shingles.
30. The leaflet will also be available in Arabic, Mandarin and Polish, and in Easy Read, BSL and audio formats at www.nhsinform.scot/shingles (under 'Further Information'). NHS Health Scotland is happy to consider requests for other languages and formats. Please contact 0131 314 5300 or email nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net

Workforce education resources for registered healthcare practitioners

31. NHS Education for Scotland, in partnership with Health Protection Scotland, has produced educational resources for registered healthcare practitioners. These resources will be available at <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/education-and-training/by-theme-initiative/public-health/health-protection/immunisation/shingles.aspx>