



1-3 The Terrace
P.O Box 5013
Wellington

5 March 2010

Pages: 2

To: General Practitioners, Practice Nurses, Practice Managers and Health Professionals
From: David Wansbrough, Manager, Immunisation team, Ministry of Health
Subject: **UPDATE – influenza immunisation, MMR, Pertussis, Immunisation Schedule change, Yellow Fever**

1. Extension of the 2010 eligibility criteria to children (under 5) for free seasonal influenza vaccine

The Ministry of Health is extending free flu vaccination to more children aged 6 months to under 5 years, for 2010 only. General practices can use their discretion to offer free flu immunisation to children from high deprivation backgrounds who are aged between 6 months and 5 years.

Children with certain chronic conditions are already eligible - which is the case every year.

Evidence from 2009 suggests that children with chronic medical conditions, particularly respiratory and neurological; children from areas of high deprivation (quintile 5); and Maori and Pacific children are more at risk of hospitalisation from swine flu.

2. Licensure of INFLUVAC®

INFLUVAC® was approved on 27 January 2010 for use in infants and children from 6 months of age (note this differs from the information in the 2010 Flu Kit). Please refer to www.medsafe.govt.nz for the latest datasheet.

3. Administering INFLUVAC® to children under 3 years of age

The INFLUVAC® syringe has no graduated marking to administer 0.25ml of vaccine, the recommended dose for infants and children aged from 6 months to 35 months. For clear instructions on how to administer 0.25 ml of the INFLUVAC® vaccine go to <http://www.immune.org.nz/?t=561> or phone 0800 466863.

4. MMR - back to business as usual

There have been no new confirmed cases of measles since December last year. As we have now passed two incubation periods, we are advising all general practices to go back to offering MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine at **15 months and four years of age** – the times recommended in the National Immunisation Schedule. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to offering early MMR immunisation and catch-ups to patients during the recent measles outbreaks.

5. Pertussis

On time pertussis immunisation remains a priority, especially for babies. Since 26 December 2009, there were 20 notifications of pertussis in infants under one year of age, of whom 15 were hospitalised. All suspected cases must be notified to your local Medical Officer of Health. For laboratory confirmation, obtain a nasopharyngeal swab for culture or PCR if the patient has had symptoms for less than three weeks.

6. National Immunisation Schedule Change in 2011

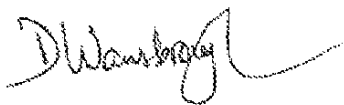
The National Immunisation Schedule is now being updated every three years instead of every

two years. This means that the next Schedule change will be in 2011 instead of June 2010. The work involved in reviewing and updating the schedule is increasingly complex, requiring longer lead-in times to fully inform health professionals and the public, and to ensure that our systems are working smoothly before changes are implemented.

7. Yellow Fever policy and approvals

The Ministry has recently updated the Yellow Fever policy and the processes for applying for vaccinator and clinic approval have been simplified. The policy and application forms for approval are available on the Ministry website at [http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagesmh/2848/\\$File/yellow-fever-vaccination-policy-2010.pdf](http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagesmh/2848/$File/yellow-fever-vaccination-policy-2010.pdf)

If you have any queries about anything in this update, please email immunisation@moh.govt.nz.



David Wansbrough
Manager
Immunisation team
Population Health Protection Group