



MeNZB™ Update

Issue 2, November 2004:
Primary Care

The immunisation of children aged between six months and five years as part of the Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme is due to commence in the remainder of Auckland DHB (the programme in the Eastern Corridor has begun) on **November 8** this year.

Primary Care practices are key health and immunisation providers for this age group. In order to preserve the capacity and resources of Primary Care providers, it is crucial that your focus for delivery remains on the under five year olds. The high incidence of disease amongst children under five years of age and disproportionate rates for Maori, Pacific and children living in more deprived areas, make it essential that your programme delivery prioritises these populations.

Licensure

The vaccine is licensed for use only in children aged six months and over. The clinical trial for young infants aged from six weeks to six months is close to completion. Data from this trial will be used in an application to extend the current license to allow children aged from six weeks to be immunised. The Ministry of Health will advise of any changes to licensure conditions.

Vaccinating school-aged children

The Counties Manukau Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme has revealed a number of issues arising from school-age children being vaccinated in primary care. Foremost among these issues are:

- Children continue to arrive for vaccination in a school campaign despite having been already vaccinated in a Primary Care setting.
- Public Health Nurses are spending significant amounts of time following

up non-returned consent forms only to discover that the child has already been vaccinated.

- Parents continue to sign consent forms for school vaccination even when their child has already been vaccinated.

There are a few exceptions where it is recommended that children attending school should be immunised in Primary Care. These exceptions are as follows:

- children and young people who have missed the school campaign and have been referred to primary care by the Public Health Nursing services
- children and young people who have had a MeNZB™ vaccine in a school-based campaign but have left school before completing the course of three vaccinations
- children and young people referred by the Public Health Nursing services for medical reasons, which may require consultation with the specialist involved, such as:
 - a documented history of anaphylaxis with cardio respiratory symptoms
 - a documented history of worsening episodes of allergic symptoms due to any cause
 - thrombocytopenia or a bleeding disorder

It is crucial that parents understand that if their school-aged child is immunised in a Primary Care setting that it is an exceptional circumstance – the child is not to be vaccinated as part of the school campaign as well. This needs to be clearly indicated on the consent form when they get it. Primary Care providers should provide information/education to parents about school campaigns if they have undertaken vaccination. This will prevent confusion for children/parents and the Public Health Nursing teams.

The Ministry has prepared a new flyer to help explain to the public why school students should be immunised through a school-based campaign. The flyers will be sent to all general practices vaccinating this year and are available for re-ordering.

Youth out of school

The campaign for youth under twenty years of age will officially kick off next February, but, it is recommended that if the opportunity presents itself between now and then, to take advantage of the young person's presence in your clinic –

and vaccinate. You should also take responsibility to follow-up for the complete course.

Dose Intervals

The recommended course for the MeNZB™ vaccine is three doses with an interval of six weeks between each dose but it is acknowledged that the realities of the school-based immunisation campaign mean that dosage intervals may vary.

The administration of the MeNZB™ vaccine at intervals other than six weeks has not been studied. However altering the timing between the required three doses of MeNZB™ vaccine is not considered a safety issue. Therefore for the school-based campaign where children of five years and older are being vaccinated, the Ministry considers a shortened interval between doses acceptable where it is necessary to ensure the third dose is given.

Primary Care in Auckland DHB will have a potential dilemma when vaccinating children between mid and late November for dose one as dose two should be scheduled during the Christmas/New Year break. GP practices have the following options:

- Vaccinate and set-up dose two **before** Christmas but **no less than four weeks** after dose one;
- Vaccinate and set-up dose two after Christmas but **no greater than eight weeks** after dose one;

Details of the recommended dose intervals appear on page 16 of the Programme Guidelines For Health Professionals that have been sent to all vaccinators and are also available at www.immunise.moh.govt.nz/Vaccinators.html

Safety monitoring

The safety of the MeNZB™ vaccine has been endorsed by independent experts.

The Independent Safety Monitoring Board (ISMB), established by the Health Research Council, met in the first week of October to consider the safety data for the first two months of the immunisation programme.

Data for the period 19 July to 19 September 2004 was considered, during which time more than 140,000 doses of MeNZB™ were administered.

The ISMB advises that it has no particular issues for concern in relation to vaccine safety.

Aluminium content

Aluminium is used in some vaccines as an adjuvant (something which helps stimulate an immune response.) The roles of aluminium adjuvants in vaccines are:

- to bring the antigen into contact with the immune system and influence the type of immunity produced – including the quality;
- to decrease the toxicity of certain antigens such as pertussis, diphtheria and tetanus;
- to make some vaccine components soluble.

There have been many studies concerning risk levels for ingested aluminium and minimum risk levels have been set. The amount of aluminium in MeNZB™ is well within international standards for vaccines. Based on 70 years of experience, the use of aluminium in vaccines has proven to be safe and effective.

Vaccine ordering

Vaccine distribution is going very well, however Excel advise that there continues to be a number of practices putting a GP name, instead of a practice name, on the order form which delays the order. The order form requires the provider name – this is the practice name not the GP name.

For the national immunisations schedule vaccines delivered by Propharma (Zuellig), deliveries have to occur within a 4-6 hour window. **This is not the case with the MeNZB™ vaccine deliveries.** Because the MeNZB™ is delivered in specially designed chilly bins the vaccine temperature is maintained between 2C and 8C for 24 hours duration from the time the chilly bin was packed.

A reminder that it is recommended that providers hold no more than one week's supply of the vaccine at any given time and spread the weekly requirement over

2-3 deliveries per week (or more if necessary). The Ministry has implemented an allocation system to carefully manage and monitor the supply of the MeNZB™ vaccine.

The amount of vaccine allocated to providers is based on under five years and out of school populations where known, and/or usage of the National Immunisation Schedule vaccines. Excel reports fortnightly on the percentage of allocation used to date by the provider.

Advertising

A new wave of television and radio advertising is due to start in the greater Auckland and Northland region in November to support the DHB's rollout of the programme. Advertising on buses and bus stands has also begun in Auckland.

Workforce issues

Recruitment for Registered Nurses for the school-based programme has begun with a more intensive advertising campaign due to kick off in this month. The campaign will also be an opportunity to identify Registered Nurses interested in working in Primary Care. For more information contact the Recruitment and HR Centre on (09) 630 9900 or 0800 733 968 or visit www.aucklandhealthcareers.co.nz.

We would like to remind Primary Health Care practices and PHOs that under the 2003 HPCA Act for Enrolled Nurses to work safely within their scope of practice in the MeNZB™ programme they need to be working in a controlled environment under the supervision and direction of a registered health professional i.e. a GP or Registered Nurse. They also need to have completed appropriate training and competency assessment. For any queries please contact Taima Campbell on (09) 307 4922 or email TaimaC@adhb.govt.nz.

Resources from MoH

Erin Wislang has taken charge of the distribution of printed resources. She is contactable through MVSResources_Comms@moh.govt.nz
Erin says please:

- do not over-order resources

- prepare orders according to your enrolled patients
- plan ahead and allow at least five days turn around on orders
- provide patients with a leaflet (MVA0401) and only give them a 16-page booklet if they request additional information. We have limited numbers of the booklet and it is expensive to reprint.

Cold Chain Accreditation

In ADHB we have passed the 80% accreditation mark with only a few practices to be completed. If you have not had your practice assessed for accreditation please fax the self audit form to your PHO as soon as possible.

Contacts

Primary Care:

- Kathy Pritchard – (09) 631 0791
KathyPr@adhb.govt.nz
- Allan Pelkowitz – (09) 630 9943 x4098#
allanp@adhb.govt.nz

NIR:

- Charles Misquitta – (09) 638 0393
CMisquitta@adhb.govt.nz
- Janine Peters - Ph: (09) 638 0394
JPeters@adhb.govt.nz

Pacific:

- Phillip Keleti – (09) 630 9943 x 3798#
PhillipK2@adhb.govt.nz

Maori:

- Gail Wilson – Ph: (09) 630 9943 x4014#
GWilson@adhb.govt.nz

Numbers in a nutshell:

- More than 200,000 doses administered
- More than 120,000 people vaccinated
- More than 140,000 doses given in the school-based campaign
- More than 60,000 doses given in Primary Care
- More than 8000 calls to the 0800 service
- More than 80 percent of all children under five years in Counties Manukau and the Eastern Corridor of Auckland have received their first dose
- More than seven million resources to be printed

Update - Meningococcal B Epidemic

As at 15 October, there have been 286 cases and six deaths this year. Case numbers can vary from year to year and variance does not necessarily indicate a trend.