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To: Primary Care Teams, Health Professionals

From: Trish Farrelly, Acting Manager Immunisation

Subject: **Influenza start date and resources, Measles outbreak and national advice**



Influenza start date and resources

Influvac Tetra, the funded vaccine for adults and children 3 years and over, is now available to pre-order. We anticipate deliveries will begin shortly in time for the start date of 1 April.

In contrast to previous years, claims for funded influenza vaccines given before 1 April will not be accepted.

The Flu Kit is available online at www.influenza.org.nz.

Fluarix Tetra for children under 3 years ie 6 to 35 months is expected to be available from mid-April. Limited quantities of Fluarix Tetra are available – please reserve this for children aged 6 to 35 months old. Please do not plan clinics for young children until these supplies have arrived.

We are working with Canterbury DHB to plan deliveries of influenza vaccine in that region to avoid overwhelming practice fridge capacity during their MMR campaign.

Measles

We appreciate the hard work practices are doing around the country managing unexpectedly high demand for MMR immunisation. While the increase in awareness is positive, demand needs to be carefully managed to ensure our resources can support the standard immunisation programme, which is our first line of defence against future outbreaks. We ask your assistance in reassuring the population that this is not an emergency and that those not immediately at risk can be vaccinated later as supplies allow.

Canterbury DHB are undertaking a MMR vaccination campaign in response to a local outbreak of measles. Their first priority is vaccination of people aged 12 months to 28 years who have never received a measles or MMR vaccine.

It is essential that all practices outside of Canterbury maintain the National Immunisation Programme of MMR vaccination at ages 15 months and 4 years. There are sufficient national stocks of MMR vaccine to do this. Stocks are being managed carefully to meet everyone's needs. **Please order according to your patient population of 15 month and 4 year olds.**

Additional stock is being sent to Canterbury for immunisation of older children and adults in that region who have not received a vaccine previously. Because of the constraints around vaccine supplies, we do not at this stage recommend that practices elsewhere in the country proactively recall older children and adults for catch up immunisation.

One dose of MMR or measles vaccine will protect 95% of vaccinated people against measles, so patients who have previously been vaccinated are likely to be protected. However if unvaccinated people request vaccination you should vaccinate if you have MMR vaccine. Otherwise please arrange vaccination at a later stage when demand on supplies has lessened. If you are able to accommodate requests for catch up immunisation, we remind practices that this is publicly funded and should not be charged for. Serology is not recommended.

The Ministry of Health is advising practices to be alert to the possibility of measles among patients.

MMR can be given to infants aged 6-11 months if there is a high risk of exposure to measles, for example travel to countries with serious outbreaks. The vaccine given to this age group can be entered on the NIR using your PMS high risk MMR vaccine option leaving the scheduled 15 month and 4 year MMR vaccine still to be given in the future as per the Immunisation Schedule. These younger infants will need two further doses of MMR as per the Immunisation Schedule since the effectiveness of the vaccine is lower in this age group. The additional vaccination at 6-11 months of age is funded.

At this stage, travel to Canterbury is not considered to carry the same level of risk as travel to countries with serious outbreaks, and early vaccination is therefore not funded.

For any further information, please consult the Communicable Disease Manual chapter regarding measles: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/communicable-disease-control-manual/measles. Ministry of Health measles information is available at: www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles. The Immunisation Handbook chapter on measles is also a useful resource: <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/immshandbook-11-measles-mar18-v2.pdf>.

Updates to this information will be published on the Ministry of Health website at www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/measles-information-health-professionals

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