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To: Primary Care Teams, Health Professionals

From: Kath Blair, Manager, Immunisation

Subject: **Childhood immunisation rates, COVID-19 immunisation, National Immunisation Solution, Pharmacist administration of HPV and MMR vaccine, Measles immunisation campaign, MenACWY and Zoster catch up.**



Childhood immunisation rates

Updated figures from the last quarter have been published at <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/immunisation/immunisation-coverage/national-and-dhb-immunisation-data> - these show a reduction in immunisation rates for events that were due last autumn and winter. This varied across different DHBs, but disproportionately affected tamariki Māori and babies living in the highest deprivation areas, particularly at the 6 month milestone age. Please make every effort to ensure that any overdue children in your practice are caught up as soon as possible.

Planning for a COVID-19 immunisation programme

The Ministry has set up a team to support the purchasing process and COVID-19 immunisation programme when safe and effective vaccines become available. The team sits within the COVID-19 Health System Response directorate. Because the characteristics of potential vaccines and their likely production and distribution timeframes are significant unknowns, the Ministry is planning for a variety of scenarios and timeframes.

We're working closely with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) who are concluding the advance purchase agreements and securing a guaranteed supply of potential vaccines for New Zealand and participating Pacific nations. We'll also be working together with a range of stakeholders to address their questions, concerns, issues and opportunities.

We hope to begin more detailed discussions with providers over the coming months. In the meantime, you can find information about the government's vaccine strategy at <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines/>

If you have any questions, you can get in touch with the COVID-19 immunisation team directly at COVID-19vaccine@health.govt.nz.

National Immunisation Solution to replace the National Immunisation Register

With funding now approved, work is underway on a National Immunisation Solution. The first priority is to be able to capture COVID-19 vaccination information in time for a vaccination campaign. The project will then extend to include replacing the entire National Immunisation Register. We expect the new system to be in place by early 2022 and will keep you posted on progress.

Pharmacist administration of HPV and MMR vaccines

Following the recent recommendation of the Medicines Classification Committee, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is now a Prescription Medicine, except when administered by a registered pharmacist or registered intern pharmacist who:

- has successfully completed a vaccinator training course approved by the Ministry of Health, and
- is complying with the Ministry of Health's immunisation standards.

Only privately purchased HPV vaccination is available at pharmacies.

From 28 October 2020, MMR that has been approved by Medsafe for supply will be temporarily classified as a prescription-only medicine, except when administered by a vaccinator who meets the requirements in the bullets above.

The decision was made in response to feedback on the limitations of the pharmacy-only classification. It means that pharmacist vaccinators can now administer MMR outside pharmacy settings and support community outreach initiatives during the Measles Immunisation Campaign. As the lower age limit for pharmacist vaccination is 16 for MMR, this relates only to the measles catch up immunisation programme rather than scheduled vaccination for young children.

Measles Immunisation Campaign for 15 to 30-year olds

Thank you for supporting this important public health initiative to improve measles immunity in our 15 to 30-year olds, particularly Māori and Pacific peoples.

Please continue to take every opportunity to give MMR to people in this age group who may not have been immunised as children. A number of you are working with your DHBs on outreach programmes and building on mahi done during this year's influenza campaign – keep up the great work.

Talk with your DHB to see how your practice can support the campaign or get in touch at Measles.Campaign@health.govt.nz.

Resources are available at <https://www.hpa.org.nz/campaign/guardians-of-the-future> to help promote the campaign.

Updated timing for Meningococcal ACWY and Zoster vaccine catch up

As a result of the disruption caused to the health sector by COVID-19, the catch-up programmes for Meningococcal ACWY and Zoster vaccine will be extended. Young people living in shared accommodation will continue to be eligible for Meningococcal ACWY until 30 November 2021, and those aged 65 to 80 will continue to be eligible for Zoster vaccine until 31 December 2021.

If you have any queries about anything in this update, please get in touch at immunisation@health.govt.nz