Safe practice — vaccines are prescription medicines

Registered nurses place their nursing practice at risk each time they administer a vaccine without a prescription or standing order unless the registered nurse is an authorised vaccinator and is administering a specifically stated vaccine or vaccines for the purpose of an approved immunisation programme, for example the National Immunisation Schedule or a local immunisation programme approved by the Medical Officer of Health.

Registered nurses are required to administer medications within legislation, codes and scope of practice; and according to authorised prescription, established policy and guidelines.

- When a registered nurse **IS NOT** an authorised vaccinator
  - Every vaccine dose must be prescribed individually or with a standing order from a registered medical practitioner, nurse practitioner with prescribing rights or registered midwife

- When a registered nurse **IS** an authorised vaccinator
  - An authorised vaccinator can administer the specific vaccines covered by their authority without a prescription or standing order
  - Any other vaccine has to be prescribed individually or with standing order

A patient’s doctor may write “Needs hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines for travel” in the clinical notes. A registered nurse cannot use this clinical note to administer either a course of Twinrix® or a course of Havrix® and Engerix-B® vaccines, without a prescription. A prescription in the clinical notes needs to include the vaccine name, strength (where appropriate), dose, and frequency of dose administration.

Standing Order Guidelines have been developed by the Ministry of Health to assist issuers comply with regulatory requirements when developing and/or reviewing a standing order, and to assist people administering and/or supplying under standing orders. A copy of the Guidelines can be downloaded from the Ministry of Health website.

Non-Schedule vaccines that may be covered by a local immunisation programme approved by the Medical Officer of Health include influenza vaccine for healthy individuals aged under 65 years, vaccines to reduce occupational risk of acquiring disease, vaccines to protect travellers, and tetanus/diphtheria/pertussis vaccine for household contacts of new babies.

**References**
Addressing some of the questions we receive on the 0800 IMMUNE phone line

Influenza website for health professionals

A key resource for the 2016 Influenza Immunisation Programme is the Health Professionals website, www.influenza.org.nz.

Influenza Immunisation Programme resources can only be ordered online through the website this year.

The website also provides information about claiming funded vaccine, recording influenza immunisation on the NIR, use of antivirals for influenza treatment and/or prevention, and related diseases (pneumococcal, meningococcal, and pertussis). You can also access the Influvac® and Fluarix® data sheets, funded vaccine order form, and the Influenza Kit references.

2016 Influenza Kit

When will I receive my 2016 Influenza Kit?

Influenza Kits have been posted to general practices, DHB/healthcare workers, private vaccinators, pharmacists, and midwives/LMCs.

If you have not received an Influenza Kit please contact Erin by email influenza@auckland.ac.nz or telephone 09 923 2075.

The 2016 Influenza Kit is also available online at www.influenza.org.nz.

Influenza vaccines 2016

What influenza vaccine brands are funded for eligible patients?

Influvac® and Fluarix® are the only vaccines funded for individuals who are eligible to receive free influenza vaccine.

Claims submitted for any other influenza vaccine brand will not be accepted.

How do I order funded influenza vaccines?

Influvac® and Fluarix® can be ordered online or by fax. The 2016 order form can be photocopied from the Influenza Kit or downloaded from www.influenza.org.nz.

When will the funded influenza vaccines be available?

Distribution of influenza vaccines is expected to begin in late March. Please do not book clinics before you receive your vaccines.

When can we start giving funded influenza vaccines?

Administration and claiming of funded influenza vaccines can begin as soon as your clinic receive the vaccines.

How often can I order funded influenza vaccines?

Depending on your fridge capacity, please try to order every two weeks (the same weeks as you order funded Schedule vaccines). Due to demand, please allow up to 48 hours for dispatch of your order. Please do not book clinics before you receive your vaccines.

Are influenza vaccinations being recorded on the NIR?

All influenza vaccinations given at general practices will be recorded on the NIR unless an adult does not want their vaccination recorded on the Register. Information about recording influenza vaccinations on the NIR is available on www.influenza.org.nz.

Pharmacists and workplace vaccinators are not yet able to send influenza vaccination messages to the NIR.

Egg and latex vaccine questions

Can Influvac® and Fluarix® be given to people with egg allergies?

In most cases the vaccine can be safely administered to people with a history of allergy to egg.

If a patient has a high-risk of complications from influenza and has a history of egg anaphylaxis, it is important to seek specialist advice. The risk of anaphylaxis needs to be considered against the benefits of being protected from influenza or its complications. As the vaccine virus is grown in hens’ eggs it may contain minute amounts of egg protein. Other allergies to eggs that are non-anaphylactic are not a contraindication.

GET THE FACTS ON IMMUNISATION 0800 IMMUNE 4 6 6 8 6 3

Contact the editorial team:
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For evidence based information from the Immunisation Advisory Centre visit our website at wwwimmune.org.nz