



08th August 2017

Letter for dental professionals

Dear colleagues,

RE: Shortage of hepatitis B vaccines - recommendations for general practice

There is a global shortage of hepatitis B vaccine which is currently impacting severely on the UK supply. The situation is particularly critical during August but limitations on supply are likely to continue until early 2018. To ensure that stock is available for those individuals at highest and most immediate risk of exposure to hepatitis B, Public Health England (PHE) has developed temporary recommendations to support clinicians undertaking an individual risk assessment.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints>

PHE and DH have been working with both vaccine manufacturers to institute ordering restrictions according to customer type. General medical practice and private occupational health services will not be able to order any adult hepatitis B vaccine stock until further notice.

Implications for practising dental professionals

Post-exposure management

Dental professionals requiring post-exposure hepatitis B vaccine, who cannot access vaccine via the normal route, should be referred to urgent care for assessment.

(Where it would not be appropriate to refer to other services, exceptional next-day orders are also possible in response to an urgent and immediate need for an individual following a risk assessment).

Pre-exposure vaccination

Most dental practitioners will have been fully vaccinated during training and then tested to confirm response to the primary course. Those coming to the end of their dental

undergraduate courses who are due to start work as VTs in September may be due a routine booster (normally given around five years after the primary course). The benefit of this booster in known responders to vaccination is small, and therefore it can be safely deferred until early 2018. Not having received the booster should not be a barrier to ongoing work.

Dentists coming from non UK universities, if not already vaccinated, who are trying to get onto the Performers List, and other members of the wider dental team e.g. dental nurses hygienists may need to restrict certain activities until vaccine becomes available. As always, all trainees should be fully informed about how to minimise exposure and what to do if an exposure occurs.

Implications for dental students

Programmes to vaccinate health care students, including dentists, may need to be deferred until early 2018. Occupational health departments have been asked to assess the risk for students in universities who undertake clinical procedures in the first year, and to discuss the need for curriculum realignment for student who cannot be vaccinated.

The situation is under constant review, to ensure that available supply is able to match the clinical need for the rest of the year. PHE is developing patient and public facing materials which will be published alongside any changes to guidance on gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

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