



Attention: All General Practitioners

Dear colleague,

4th August 2017

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.

PHE and DH have been working with both vaccine manufacturers to institute ordering restrictions according to customer type. It has been agreed with the BMA's General Practice Committee that general practice will not be able to order any adult hepatitis B vaccine stock until further notice.

High risk babies born to hepatitis B infected mothers

Supply for paediatric monovalent hepatitis B vaccine has been protected to ensure that the programme for vaccinating infants born to hepatitis B infected mothers can continue. There should be no delay in providing vaccines to these children. You can continue to order this vaccine through your usual supplier. There are some restrictions in place on the volume of ordering but these can be overridden on a case by case basis as appropriate.

Pre- and post-exposure hepatitis B vaccination for all other risk groups

- Patients requiring post-exposure hepatitis B vaccine should be referred to Accident and Emergency Departments for an assessment.
- Requests for hepatitis B vaccination from specialist NHS services should be referred back to the hospital trust
- [The National Travel Health Network and Centre](#) (NaTHNaC) provides hepatitis B immunisation recommendations and advice for travellers.

A mechanism will be in place, however, to allow for exceptional orders through your usual supplier if there is an urgent and immediate need for an individual following risk assessment and it would not be appropriate to refer to other services for vaccination.

Routine childhood programme: hexavalent combination vaccine (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB)

The hexavalent vaccine (DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB) due to be used in the routine childhood immunisation programme from late September is not affected by these supply constraints.

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 and [Vaccine Update](#).

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Mary Ramsay

Head of Immunisation, Hepatitis, Blood Safety and Countermeasures Response