

Changes to eligibility for shingles vaccination and actions to improve uptake locally

There is currently low uptake of the shingles vaccine in some areas, with considerable variation between practices in the region. The Screening and Immunisation Team has emailed practices this week with your individual uptake rates. It is likely that poor uptake is largely to do with confusion surrounding eligibility for the vaccine and public awareness. The eligibility criteria have recently been changed in order to address this.

From 1 April 2017, eligibility for shingles vaccination has been changed to:

- **the date a patient turns 70 years**
- **the date a patient turns 78 years (for the catch-up cohort)**

The vaccine is also available for those previously eligible but who missed immunisation. For example:

- **anyone in their 70s who was born after 1 September 1942 and has not yet had the vaccine**
- **anyone aged 79 years old who has missed out on the vaccine**

Patients remain eligible for the shingles vaccine up **until their 80th birthday** - people aged 80 years and over are not eligible for the shingles vaccination because the vaccine becomes less effective as people get older.

Please note that the eligibility calculator currently available on the Department of Health website has not been updated to reflect the new age criteria – do not use this to calculate patient eligibility. A new calculator is due to be published in the next month or so and we will send this to you as soon as it becomes available.

As the eligibility criteria have been very confusing in the past, we suggest that for 2017-18, you simply invite all patients on their 70th or 78th birthday and identify other eligible patients (defined above) on an opportunistic basis. One way that you could do the former is to run a search of all eligible patients each month and invite them accordingly.

You do not need to give the vaccine with flu. The shingles vaccine can be offered throughout the year to protect people at the earliest opportunity.

Please see the following:

- A new **patient poster** highlighting who is eligible for shingles vaccination can be found here along with ordering information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shingles-vaccination-eligibility-poster>. Based on feedback, the national team are also in the process of producing an alternative poster to clarify age eligibility and this should be available shortly.
- A new **patient leaflet and postcard** can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shingles-vaccination-for-adults-aged-70-or-79-years-of-age-a5-leaflet>. The details of the vaccination appointment and address of the GP practice can be added to the back of the postcard and it can then be sent out to eligible patients to invite them to attend their appointment.

What can be done to improve uptake figures?

We have produced a good practice guide for GP practices which outlines how you can improve vaccine uptake locally (attached). This was put together through working with general practices in the South West who are achieving high uptake of the vaccine.

This highlights that the main action you can take to improve your uptake figures is to offer the shingles vaccination on a **call-recall basis** by sending a letter inviting eligible patients (i.e. on their 70th or 78th birthday) to have their vaccination and to follow up any non-responders with further letters and/or telephone calls.

We have also drafted an invitation letter for patients that can be adapted for use (also attached).

We are planning some wider comms for August in order to raise awareness of shingles vaccination amongst the public.

A single dose of the vaccine has been shown to reduce the incidence of shingles by 38%. If shingles does develop, the symptom severity is greatly reduced, and the incidence of post-herpetic neuralgia drops by 67%.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Screening and Immunisation Team: england.southwestscrimms@nhs.net. Lynne Benton (Screening and Immunisation Coordinator) is now taking over the shingles programme with support from Alison Mackenzie (Screening and Immunisation Lead). Lynne can be contacted directly on: 07825 421144 or via email: Lynne.Benton@nhs.net.