
Date: 21 May 2020 Pages: 1 of 2

To: Primary Care Teams, Health Professionals

From: Deborah Woodley, Deputy Director-General

Subject: **Influenza vaccine, Varilrix, Hepatitis B Vaccine, Boostrix Singles, Gardasil 9 labels**



Influenza vaccination progress and supply

The Ministry of Health is pleased to see record numbers of people seeking to be immunised this year. We realise this has placed extra demand on our providers while you're already managing the challenges of preparing for and responding to COVID-19. We would like to thank you for prioritising our vulnerable groups, and for your patience as we manage the supply responsibly and equitably.

Almost all of this year's expected 1.768 million doses of influenza vaccine have been distributed to date, and we expect most of this has been administered to patients. According to the NIR, 911,299 people have been vaccinated against influenza – this exceeds the total recorded on the NIR as vaccinated in any previous season, and it is likely that many more people have been vaccinated without being recorded. 778,843 claims for funded influenza vaccine have been lodged - this reflects providers' hard work in ensuring those at greatest risk of serious illness from influenza had priority access to vaccination in the early weeks of the campaign. The information available to the Ministry depends on general practices and pharmacies recording all vaccinations on the NIR.

Northern hemisphere influenza vaccine

Demand for influenza vaccination has been exceptionally high this year, and we expect private market demand in particular to exceed available stocks of Afluria Quad. To offer protection to non-funded patients still wanting to be immunised against influenza this winter, the Ministry of Health and Pharmac have successfully secured 360,000 doses of a vaccine manufactured for the 2019/2020 Northern Hemisphere flu season, which will be available for providers to order from today.

The Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) advised the Ministry of Health's Immunisation Technical Advisory Group on the strains in the 2019/20 Northern Hemisphere vaccine, and noted two of the Northern Hemisphere's influenza strains (A/H1N1 and B/Phuket) match the current Southern Hemisphere's strain. A third strain, B/Colorado, is a close relative of B/Washington strain and so likely to provide reasonable protection. While the fourth strain (A/H3N2) is not a good match against the expected Southern Hemisphere strains, it may still offer some residual protection. However, this strain is not currently one of the predominant strains circulating in New Zealand.

While the influenza strains currently circulating in New Zealand are covered by the Northern Hemisphere vaccine, we can't predict if this will change during the flu season. This means the 2020 New Zealand season vaccine is recommended for those most at risk of serious illness from influenza.

The Northern Hemisphere vaccine, Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020), is not indicated for use with funded patients. From now on, please reserve sufficient stocks of Afluria Quad (the current Southern Hemisphere vaccine) for your remaining funded patients. Because Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) may offer less protection for one strain than Afluria Quad, you must continue vaccinating your eligible patients with Afluria Quad vaccine only.

More information about Influvac Tetra (Saison 2019/2020) is available on the Ministry website, www.influenza.org.nz and on the Medsafe Data Sheet.

Routine immunisations

The National Immunisation Schedule continues to be an essential health service at all COVID-19 alert levels. Please keep recalling patients, especially babies and young children, for their regular immunisations. The Ministry will shortly be promoting routine childhood immunisation to parents who may have been worried about bringing their children to the doctor during lockdown.

Varivax to temporarily replace Varilrix

ProPharma will shortly start distributing the Varivax brand of the varicella vaccine, temporarily replacing the Varilrix brand.

Varilrix is expected to be available again in late May and will be supplied until approximately August 2020 when Varivax will be supplied as part of the upcoming Immunisation Schedule change.

Varivax is indicated for use in children from age 12 months, rather than 9 months. The data sheet for Varivax is available online at <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/v/Varivaxinj.pdf>

Hepatitis B

The HBVaxPRO 5mcg brand of hepatitis B vaccine is being discontinued, with ProPharma branches expected to exhaust supply in May or June 2020. The Engerix-B 20 mcg brand will then be available. Engerix-B 20 mcg may be used in neonates, infants and children, as well as adults.

The data sheet for Engerix-B is available online at <https://medsafe.govt.nz/profs/datasheet/e/Engerix-BAdultinj.pdf>

Boostrix Singles

Supply of Boostrix in a single dose presentation is being discontinued with ProPharma branches expected to run out of this presentation in May 2020. Boostrix will continue to be available in a 10 pack presentation.

Gardasil 9

Recently a delivery of Gardasil 9 was delayed due to a batch having a labelling issue defect; when some of the labels are removed from the syringe it causes the batch number and expiry date to be smudged and therefore difficult to read. MSD have consulted with Medsafe and they agree that the batch affected should be supplied, and the first delivery was made last week.

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