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Pneumococcal Program in 2005

The childhood pneumococcal vaccine program is to commence on 1 January 2005. The Australian Government has announced funding for the **catch-up phase** of the program that will provide free vaccine for catch-up to all children born between 1st January 2003 to 31st December 2004. The catch-up component of the program will only run for the year of 2005.

Therefore from 1 January 2005 the childhood pneumococcal vaccine will be introduced as a routine vaccine for infants at 2, 4 and 6 months of age and a catch-up vaccine for children born between 1st January 2003 and 31st December 2004.

When planning a catch-up schedule for children born after 1 January 2003, the minimum time between doses of Prevenar vaccine is 1 month and there is no time restriction between Prevenar vaccine and other vaccines being administered. Prevenar vaccine is an inactive or 'killed' vaccine.

Children under 5 years of age with a medical risk factor still require a booster dose of Prevenar at 12 months of age and a booster dose of Pneumovax 23 vaccine at 4 to 5 years of age (or an appropriate course dependant on their age of commencement). The list of medical risk factors for children under 5 years is listed on *page 227 of the 8th Edition Australian Immunisation Handbook* or on the Childhood Pneumococcal Provider Information Brochure.

It is important to continue to report to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) all vaccines administered to children under 7 years of age. An ACIR payment of \$6 per dose of Prevenar vaccine for all catch-up vaccines of Prevenar will be paid in 2005. The standard payment of \$6 for a completed scheduled visit at 2, 4 and 6 months of age is unchanged in 2005.

In 2005 the Australian Government will fund the pneumococcal pneumonia (Pneumovax 23) vaccine program. Previously the Victorian State Government has been the only State in Australia to fund the older persons pneumococcal vaccine program. With the program funded by the Australian Government the supply of Pneumovax 23 vaccine should be assured throughout the whole year.

The 8th Edition Australian Immunisation Handbook states: a single booster dose of Pneumovax 23 vaccine for non-indigenous adults 65 years and older is recommended five years following the initial dose with no further booster doses required.

The Australian Government has organised written information to be sent to all General Practitioners in early December about the pneumococcal programs. All parents of children eligible for Prevenar catch-up will also receive a letter after 6th December 2004 to inform them of the free catch-up program.

Pneumococcal vaccine is ordered by using the immunisation vaccine order form. The order form is available from the immunisation website or by contacting the Immunisation Program by telephone, fax or email.

IMMUNISATION PROGRAM

Immunisation Resources

Immunisation resources are freely available for all immunisation providers to assist in helping with informed consent and possible contraindications that may apply prior to the vaccines being administered. All resources are ordered using the immunisation resource order form. The order form is available from the immunisation website www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation or by contacting the Immunisation Program by telephone, fax or email.

Resources are regularly being updated so it is recommended not to order too much stock at a time to ensure each new order you receive is the most updated version.

New resources have been developed recently to assist immunisation providers with informing people about vaccination.

A brochure for immunisation providers has been designed to act as a reference guide for determining the correct number of doses of Prevenar vaccine for routine immunisation and for those children with a medical risk factor who require booster doses of both Prevenar and Pneumovax 23 vaccine. The brochure will also assist in deciding the number of Prevenar vaccines needed to complete a course if previously commenced or about to start Prevenar vaccination.

An updated Childhood Pneumococcal fact sheet for parents is now available. It discusses the Prevenar vaccine being

part of the routine childhood immunisation schedule and the catch-up program in 2005.

The National Immunisation Program fact sheet has been updated to include pneumococcal vaccine at 2, 4 and 6 months of age. It also lists the brand name of the scheduled vaccines received at each visit.

A new Influenza fact sheet has been created in readiness for the influenza season in 2005. It is in a similar format as the other immunisation fact sheets and includes information about the disease, vaccines, side effects, contraindications and pre-immunisation checklist.

A Pneumococcal disease fact sheet has also been developed to assist the consent process for Pneumovax 23 vaccine. It is in a similar format as other fact sheets and includes information about the disease, vaccines, side effects, contraindications and pre-immunisation checklist.

The tear off pad for reactions following immunisation has been updated. It is now called 'Common reactions to immunisation' and has had small changes made with regard to side effects.

An updated pamphlet for parents about the School Entry Immunisation Certificate is available. It is called 'Starting Primary School?' It provides clear advice for parents to obtain the School Entry Immunisation Certificate for their child entering primary school.



PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

The immunisation website (www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation)

has also undergone some changes to improve accessing information from the site. There have been some new links added to assist immunisation information:

- Reporting immunisation adverse events on-line.
- Information on immunisation and autism, diabetes, common misconceptions and reactions.
- List of approved Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres in Victoria.
- New fact sheets on influenza and pneumococcal disease.
- 'What's new' links to the latest Immunisation Newsletter.
- Site Map to see what is available on the Immunisation Website.
- Immunisation Provider site for useful resources.

Vaccine Order Response

Vaccines ordered via Fax for upcoming programs such as the childhood pneumococcal program and the influenza program for 2005 will be acknowledged via return Fax. These orders are initially placed on backorder and then forwarded closer to the commencement of the program.

Following receipt of the Faxed vaccine order into the Immunisation Program, it will be assessed, the order placed on the CSL database and the vaccine order form will be date stamped as received and faxed back to the sender.

This is to acknowledge receipt of the order and avoid unnecessary phone calls.

Multiple Vaccines at the Same Visit

With the introduction of meningococcal C vaccine at 12 months of age and as a catch-up vaccine, providers and parents are now well practiced in accepting 3 injectable vaccines at a single visit for a child.

The introduction of Prevenar vaccine onto the schedule at 2, 4 and 6 months of age and administered at the same time as the other scheduled vaccines should be a smooth transition. It is very important providers confidently reassure parents of the safety of multiple vaccines given on the same visit. *Page 309 of the 8th Edition Australian Immunisation Handbook* helps to understand and answer common concerns of parents about multiple vaccine administration.

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends where 3 or more vaccines are required, they should be given without delay. This provides the appropriate protection for the child or adult in a timely manner, is safe and effective and minimises inconvenience to the family rather than returning for multiple visits.



IMMUNISATION PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

ACIR

1800 653 809 is the number to contact the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) to check a child's vaccine records or send data for all children up to the 7th Birthday.

Data Cleaning for ACIR

The 4 year old visit for vaccination is an important visit to take the opportunity to confirm all previous scheduled vaccines are reported to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR).

The ACIR provides the Child History Statement to meet the school entry immunisation certificate requirements for

children entering primary school. At the scheduled 4 year old visit, ensure ACIR has a record of MMR dose 1 before sending MMR dose 2. Confirm other doses of Infanrix, Polio and Hib are also recorded for the parent to receive a complete certificate.

Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccine Orders

Vaccine orders can now be placed for the influenza and pneumococcal vaccines. These vaccines will be delivered in February 2005 for the commencement of the influenza program in March. If you require a small quantity of Pneumovax 23 vaccine before February 2005, vaccine can be supplied now on request.



*Merry Christmas
and a safe and
Happy New Year*



to all our valued immunisation providers.

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