

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride

HSS(MD) 3/2020



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

FOR ACTION

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health and Social
Care Board/HSC Trusts/ NIAS
GP Medical Advisers, Health and Social Care Board
All General Practitioners and GP Locums (for onward
distribution to practice staff)
OOHs Medical Managers (for onward distribution to staff)

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD) 3/2020
Date: 24 January 2020

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FULL CIRCULATION LIST

Dear Colleague

CHANGE TO THE INFANT PNEUMOCOCCAL CONJUGATE VACCINE (PCV13) SCHEDULE

Action Required

Chief Executives must ensure that this information is drawn to the attention of all staff involved in childhood vaccinations to enable them to respond accordingly and encourage uptake of the vaccination.

The HSCB must ensure that this information is cascaded to all General Practitioners immediately.

Introduction

1. This letter provides information on the changes to the infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) programme.
2. As you are aware, PCV became part of the routine childhood vaccination programme in 2006 to offer protection against seven pneumococcal serotypes. In 2010, the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV7) was changed to one that offered protection against 13 pneumococcal serotypes (PCV13 (Prevenar 13®)). These vaccines were administered following a 2 + 1 schedule at 8 and 16 weeks, with a booster dose given at one year old (on or after the first birthday).
3. Following the decision in April 2019 to follow a 1 + 1 schedule, based on the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), all infants born on or after **1 January 2020** will be offered the changed schedule.

4. This will be a single dose of PCV13 alongside the routine DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB and rotavirus immunisations at 12 weeks of age, followed by a PCV13 booster at one year old (on or after the first birthday). This is referred to as a 1 + 1 PCV schedule.
5. The first birth cohort to be offered the new schedule will begin from **25 March 2020**, as those infants born on or after 1 January 2020 start to attain 12 weeks of age.
6. This 1 + 1 schedule will replace the previous schedule of 2 + 1 (at 8 and 16 weeks), and a booster dose given at one year old (on or after the first birthday).
7. This letter is aimed at health professionals who will be responsible for implementing the changes to the PCV schedule. We encourage you to share this guidance with all those who will be involved in helping to deliver the national childhood immunisation schedule in your area.
8. The payment rate in relation to PCV currently remains unchanged. Where payment is for providing the final completing course in the schedule, this will now be the 2nd dose.

Key points about the changes to the programme

9. The same vaccine that is currently used for the infant programme (Prevenar 13®, which helps protect against invasive disease caused by pneumococcal serotypes 1, 3, 4, 5, 6A, 6B, 7F, 9V, 14, 18C, 19A, 19F, and 23F) will be used.
10. Infants born on or after **1 January 2020** should be offered Prevenar 13® routinely as a 1+1 schedule (routinely at 12 weeks and one year old (on or after the first birthday). This should start to occur around the **25 March 2020**.
11. Infants born on or before **31 December 2019** should remain on the previous schedule of 2+1 (routinely at 8 and 16 weeks, and a booster dose given at one year old (on or after the first birthday)

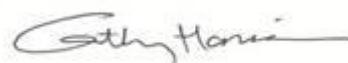
Additional information

- A revised version of the infant immunisation information leaflet is now available on the PHA webpage.
- Further detailed information for healthcare professionals including a presentation & factsheet is available on the [PHA Immunisation webpage](#)
- A summary of key issues relating to the changes in the schedule is set out in **Annex A**.

- The pneumococcal chapter of the Green Book (Immunisation against infectious disease) has been updated and is available here: [Pneumococcal chapter of the Green Book](#)
 - The JCVI minutes from June 2018 (page 12-16) recommending the change to the infant PCV programme are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation#minutes>
 - An updated patient group direction (PGD) template from the Health and Social Care Board & Public Health Agency for the administration of PCV will be available ahead of the requirement to administer a scheduled PCV dose at 12 weeks of age to those born on or after 1 January 2020.
12. Northern Ireland's successful national immunisation programmes bring great benefits to the health of the whole population and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all involved in delivering the programmes for their continuing hard work.

Yours sincerely





Dr Michael McBride
Chief Medical Officer

Prof Charlotte McArdle
Chief Nursing Officer

Mrs Cathy Harrison
Chief Pharmaceutical
Officer

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Joe Brogan, Assistant Director of Integrated Care, HSCB

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications>

Annex A

Guidance on immunisation of infants with pneumococcal conjugate vaccine

1. This guidance is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)¹, the UK's independent advisory committee of immunisation experts. Full guidance is available in the updated chapter on pneumococcal disease included in the 'Green Book' (Immunisation against infectious disease)².

Timing

2. The PCV13 vaccine will continue to be offered to all infants. Those born on or after 1 January 2020 will follow the new schedule. This should start to occur around the **25 March 2020**. The vaccine will continue to be available to order in the normal way.
3. For healthy infants born on or after 1 January 2020:
 - The first dose should be given at 12 weeks of age, at the same time as the second set of primary immunisations
 - As the immunogenicity of a single dose of PCV13 is lower when given at a younger age, any dose given before 12 weeks of age will not be counted and another dose should be given once the infant reaches 12 weeks of age, allowing at least four weeks between the two PCV13 doses
 - The booster dose should be given at one year of age (on or after their first birthday)
 - The minimum time between the primary dose and the booster dose should ideally be 8 weeks. This can be reduced to a 4-week interval if the primary dose is not given until 11 months of age so that immunisations due at one year of age are not delayed
 - Children who start the immunisation schedule after their first birthday should be given a single PCV13 dose.

All unimmunised or partially immunised healthy children remain eligible for PCV13 up to their second birthday. Routine immunisation with PCV13 is not offered after the second birthday unless the individual is at increased risk of pneumococcal disease (see Green Book Pneumococcal chapter (chapter 25) for risk groups) For advice on at risk groups, incomplete vaccination and those vaccinated abroad, please see the Green Book chapter and the Information for healthcare practitioners PCV schedule change document.

¹ JCVI minutes: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation#minutes> (June 2018 – page 12-16)

² Green Book chapter: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pneumococcal-the-green-book-chapter-25>

Patient Group Directions

4. An updated PGD template from the Health and Social Care Board & Public Health Agency for the administration of the PCV will be available ahead of the requirement to administer a scheduled PCV dose at 12 weeks of age to those born on or after 1 January 2020.

Child Health Information Services (CHIS)

5. The CHIS system has been updated to accommodate the PCV13 schedule for infants born on or after 1 January 2020 in order to follow the updated 1 + 1 schedule (1st Dose at 12 weeks + booster given at one year old (on or after the first birthday)).
6. Parents and caregivers of infants born on or after 1 January 2020 will be notified of their eligibility for the updated schedule and will be contacted by a healthcare professional with the offer of an appointment.
7. General practice must update the electronic patient records and the (Personal Child Health Record (Red book)).
8. A patient information flyer and range of leaflets have been produced for parents and caregivers, to support the change of the vaccine programme. They are HSC branded and are available from the PHA website
9. A document entitled 'Changes to the infant pneumococcal conjugate vaccine schedule: Information for healthcare practitioners' which provides further information in relation to programme eligibility, scheduling and vaccine administration will be available from December 2019 on the PHA Immunisation webpage.
10. The PCV vaccine information for parents on the NI Direct website will be updated shortly
11. Training slides detailing the schedule change will be available on the PHA webpage.