



Community Medicine Newsletter

Immunization Announcements

1. **HPV vaccine program using Cervarix™ for young women born 1991 – 1993 to start April 16 2012**
2. **School varicella catch up program for grade 6 students to start in September 2012**
3. **Expansion of free pertussis booster (Adacel™) program**
4. **Adacel™ vaccine safe and recommended for pregnant women**

1. Free bivalent HPV Vaccine (Cervarix™) is now available for young women ages 19, 20 and 21. They are too old to have been eligible for the school based HPV vaccine program. This will protect additional cohorts of young women from cervical cancer caused by HPV 16 and 18. These two HPV types account for about 70% of cancers of the cervix. Both HPV vaccines (Cervarix™ and Gardasil™) are endorsed by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) as offering comparable very high levels of protection against cancer of the cervix. The main difference between the two vaccines is that only Gardasil™ protects against genital warts.

Cervarix™ is given intramuscularly in the deltoid. The usual schedule is three doses with the second dose 1 month after the first, and the 3rd dose given 6 months after the first dose. There are no recommendations for booster doses at this time. If a young woman started on Gardasil™, their schedule may be completed with Cervarix™, though she should be informed that protection against genital warts may be incomplete with less than three doses of Gardasil™.

Location of immunization clinics: Vaccine will be available at physicians' offices, pharmacists, college health services, and public health youth clinics. A vaccine locator will be available online at www.immunizebc.ca to help women find clinics offering this vaccine. You can order Cervarix for your patients using the usual procedure. Vaccine will be available for pickup starting April 16. Please estimate your vaccine needs carefully as there is a limited amount available; additional orders can be placed at regular intervals.

Additional information about this campaign: www.immunizebc.ca. The 2012 NACI statement is available at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/naci-ccni/index-eng.php#rec>.

2. Second dose varicella: school catch up program for grade 6 students will start in September 2012

As recommended by NACI, free varicella vaccine is now offered in a two dose series to all children at 12 months of age and kindergarten entry. Students needing a second dose can receive it in Grade 6 at school as part of the public health vaccine program. Family physicians are free to offer the second dose to patients up to Grade 6. Please remind parents to keep their immunization records in a safe location as public health nurses seek this information in kindergarten, grade 6 and grade 9.

3. Expansion of free pertussis booster (Adacel™) program

Pertussis activity continues and there is still plenty of free vaccine available. **Please offer free vaccine to anybody (children, youth and adults) who has contact with young children (including those over 18 months of age).** The criteria are being expanded in response to local epidemiology. 55% of cases have been in children under 16 years old, with most in the 6-15 age group. The new criteria will protect more adults and prevent spread to older children.

4. Adacel™ vaccine safe and recommended for pregnant women

Some providers have been reluctant to offer Adacel™ to pregnant women. Inactivated vaccines and toxoids are considered safe in pregnancy by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. As well, the US Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) reviewed post licensure studies of Adacel™ given to pregnant women. ACIP concluded that health care professionals should recommend and offer vaccine to all pregnant women, especially those in the third trimester.

Reminder about reporting: Thank you for your help controlling the significant increase in pertussis cases. Please report clinical or suspect cases of pertussis to us (even before lab results are available) so we can follow up high risk contacts quickly.

If you require further information, please contact the nurse on call at 604-983-6700.

Sincerely,



Brian A. O'Connor, MD, MHSc
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