



Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Mental Retardation



Immunization Alert

This Medical Alert is based on the work of the Medical Review Subcommittee and should be posted prominently. The Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Mental Retardation works to improve the services provided to people with disabilities by communicating important information found in the Medical Review Subcommittee's reviews of deaths and serious injuries. Thank you for promptly reporting deaths and serious injuries. You are helping us to meet our mission.

This alert is intended to serve as a reminder for the clients of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Mental Retardation, their families, and staff, to **check with the client's primary care clinician and verify that the client has received all of the recommended vaccinations.**

Background

Since 1900, the incidence of infectious diseases, preventable by vaccination, has declined by 95-100%. In order to maintain this success, it is important that individuals continue to receive vaccinations according to the recommended schedules. The youngest Americans who can remember diphtheria and whooping cough are on Medicare. The youngest who can remember polio and the measles are in the 50's and 40's respectively. Since many of us have no experience with "epidemics," it is critical that clients, staff, and families are well-informed about immunizations. According to the Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, **"Vaccines have literally transformed the landscape of medicine over the course of the 20th century.** Before vaccines, parents in the United States could expect that every year:

- Polio would paralyze 10,000 children.
- Rubella (German measles) would cause birth defects and mental retardation in as many as 20,000 newborns.
- Measles would infect about 4 million children, killing 3,000.
- Diphtheria would be one of the most common causes of death in school-aged children.
- A bacterium called *Haemophilus influenzae type b* (Hib) would cause meningitis in 15,000 children, leaving many with permanent brain damage. Pertussis (whooping cough) would kill 8,000 children, most of whom were under the age of one."

Vaccines for Children

The Minnesota Department of Health has detailed recommendations regarding vaccinations depending on age and other health risk factors.

Up through the age of 18, children should receive vaccinations for the following diseases:

- Hepatitis B
- Diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis (DTaP)
- Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib)
- Polio
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
- Varicella (Chickenpox)
- Pneumococcal
- Hepatitis A and Influenza to select groups

Vaccines for Adults

According to *Consumer Reports* (November 2001) “adult immunization has languished in sometimes fatal neglect.” Each year, 40,000 Americans die of diseases that could have been prevented by routine adult vaccines.

The following vaccines may be recommended by the client’s primary care clinician and are listed by the CDC under its Adult Immunization Schedule:

Vaccines needed for all adults

- Varicella (chicken pox) vaccine
- Hepatitis B vaccines (adults at risk)
- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine
- Tetanus-Diphtheria vaccine

Vaccines needed for those age 50 and older

- Influenza vaccine (for the flu) – individuals in a group living situation and those who have direct contact with patients should receive an influenza vaccine yearly, in October or November, as we enter flu season.

Vaccines needed for those age 65 and older

- Pneumococcal vaccine

Vaccines needed for all health-care workers

- Influenza vaccine (for the flu)

Before receiving a vaccine, let the medical practitioner know if the individual has a fever, diarrhea, allergies, or other physical symptoms. Ask the medical practitioner which post vaccination symptoms are normal and which need medical attention. Monitor the vaccine recipient for possible post vaccination symptoms and know when to contact the medical practitioner.

Resources

Good websites are available. Beware of those that present an anti-vaccine bias. The following websites provide reliable and continuously updated information:

Centers for Disease Control

www.cdc.gov/vaccines

National Immunization Program: includes Adult vaccination schedule - “Vaccines needed by all adults,” with descriptions; 2003 Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule; Catch-up schedule; Current vaccine delays and availability of supplies; How do vaccines work?; Importance of vaccines; and much more.

National Network for Immunization Information

www.immunizationinfo.org

Includes a link to Immunization Safety Review Reports from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and Vaccine/Disease information.

Immunization Action Coalition

www.immunize.org

A wealth of information including printable “Adult IZ Record Cards.”

Vaccine Education Center

www.vaccine.chop.edu

Vaccine Education Center at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia – Common Concerns about Vaccines, In the News, A look at each vaccine, Are Vaccines Safe?, Vaccines at a Glance. and more.

Minnesota Department of Health

www.health.state.mn.us/immunize

Immunization Main Page – Hottest News, Vaccine Information Statements (in English and other languages), Vaccine Shortages, and much more.

Office of the Ombudsman for Mental Health and Mental Retardation

Suite 420, Metro Square Building, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2117

651-296-3848 or Toll Free 1-800-657-3506 TTY/voice – Minnesota Relay Service 711 Website: www.ombudmhdd.state.mn.us

May, 2003