

MEMORANDUM



To:	General Practices, Lead Maternity Carers, Plunket, Neonatal Unit Outreach Team, Neonatologists, Team Leaders Maternity Services HVDHB, CCDHB and WDHB.
From:	Dr Craig Thornley Medical Officer of Health
Date:	22 June 2016

SUBJECT: Temporary cessation of BCG vaccination – until further notice

Tēnā koutou katoa

Accompanying this memo is an advisory note, forwarded by the Ministry of Health, regarding the temporary cessation of BCG vaccination. Please note the following key points:

- Regular supply of BCG vaccine to New Zealand has been interrupted due to offshore production issues. The supplier is unable to provide a date by which supply will be resumed.
- All community BCG vaccination clinics in New Zealand are therefore postponed until further notice.
- Healthcare professionals should continue to assess for tuberculosis (TB) exposure risk in neonates and young children; the BCG eligibility criteria in the Immunisation Handbook 2014 may be used for this purpose.
- Flag increased risk in medical records and advise parents or caregivers to seek medical attention if TB signs or symptoms (listed on the advice sheet) develop.
- Please continue to refer children for BCG vaccination. However, advise parents that these children will not be booked for BCG vaccination until supply recommences.
- We will advise when BCG vaccine supply is resumed, or when further information on supply becomes available.

If you have any queries, please contact:

Melanie Kennedy, BCG Vaccination Nurse
Regional Public Health
04-570-9002

ADVICE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

16 June 2016

Temporary cessation of BCG vaccination until further notice

To Lead Maternity Carers, DHB Midwives, General Practitioners, Practice Nurses, and Public Health Units:

Since 2015 there has been an ongoing global shortage of BCG vaccine which is affecting New Zealand and many other countries. This shortage is due to a number of manufacturing issues which have affected vaccine supplies.

In early 2016, a limited supply of BCG vaccine with a short expiry date (31 May 2016) was secured for New Zealand. No resupply of BCG vaccine has been possible since that time. Seqirus, the vaccine supplier, has been unable to provide a date for when resumption of supplies vaccine will be possible.

As a result all public health community BCG vaccination clinics and in-hospital vaccinations are postponed until further notice. The Ministry of Health is in regular contact with PHARMAC on this matter and will advise you when more information becomes available.

BCG is a relatively minor component of TB control programmes, particularly in low endemicity countries such as New Zealand where the major components are case finding of active disease, contact tracing and treatment of active disease and latent TB infection. BCG has a limited role in protecting newborns and young infants from severe disease, particularly miliary and meningeal TB, but does not prevent primary infection.

LMCs and GPs should:

- continue to assess all neonates and new patients aged under 5 years for their risk of TB
- flag in their practice management system and/or medical records if an infant/child is at increased risk of TB (ie, meets the eligibility criteria for funded BCG vaccination)
- advise parents and caregivers of children at higher risk of TB exposure to seek medical advice if they have concerns about their child's health
 - over half of children with TB disease may have minimal signs and symptoms but the younger the child the more likely they will have symptoms. Onset of symptoms may be insidious but may occasionally, in the case of miliary disease, be rapid and overwhelming

- the most common TB symptoms in children are a non-productive, unremitting cough, mild dyspnoea, fever, malaise, anorexia, weight loss, and in younger infants, failure to thrive or lack of weight gain
- superficial lymph node enlargement occurring in a child born in or living in a family from a high risk country (see link below) is more likely to be caused by TB disease

Please note, this shortage only affects the BCG vaccine for TB and does not impact on the BCG vaccine used in the treatment of urological cancer.

Additional information and websites

A detailed list of countries with TB rates ≥ 40 per 100,000 can be found in the BCG vaccination information for health professional resource (HE2204) at the following link: https://www.healthed.govt.nz/system/files/resource-files/HE2204-BCG-Healths%20Pros-WEB_0.pdf

For further information, please contact your local Medical Officer of Health, or the appropriate Public Health Unit.