

26 March 2002

To: All General Practitioners (for onward distribution to practice staff)  
Directors of Public Health, Health & Social Services Boards  
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control  
Medical Directors of HSS Trusts (for onward distribution to relevant consultants)  
Directors of Nursing, Health & Social Services Boards  
Directors of Nursing, Health & Social Services Trusts (for onward distribution to relevant nurses including Health Visitors, School Nurses and Treatment Room Nurses)  
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services, Health & Social Services Boards/Trusts & CSA  
Community Pharmacists  
Regional Epidemiologist, CDSC  
Royal College of Nursing  
Royal College of Midwives  
Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association.

Dear Colleague

**UPDATED GUIDANCE ON PNEUMOCOCCAL VACCINE FOR AT-RISK CHILDREN UNDER 2 YEARS OLD**

1. In December 2001 we wrote to you with guidance on the use of the newly available Conjugate Pneumococcal Vaccine (Prevenar) that is licensed for use from 2 months of age to 2 years of age (HSS(MD)41-2001). The purpose of this letter is to provide more detailed guidance on the dosing schedule for this vaccine

2. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has recommended that the small number of children under 2 years of age in the "at-risk" groups, who would be recommended to receive Poly-Saccharide Vaccine if they were over 2 years, should now have the new Conjugate Pneumococcal Vaccine (Prevenar). The "at-risk" groups are defined in paragraph 25.3 of the Green Book and are as follows:

- (i) asplenia or severe dysfunction of the spleen, including homozygous sickle cell disease and coeliac syndrome;
- (ii) chronic renal disease or nephrotic syndrome;
- (iii) immunodeficiency or immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including HIV infection at all stages;
- (iv) chronic heart disease;
- (v) chronic lung disease;
- (vi) chronic liver disease including cirrhosis;
- (vii) diabetes mellitus.

**3. Recommended doses of vaccine**

The appropriate dose of Conjugate Pneumococcal Vaccine by age of the child is shown in the table below.

<b>Age of Infant</b>	<b>Recommended Dose of Conjugate Pneumococcal Vaccine</b>
Less than 6 months	3 doses of vaccine, each of 0.5ml, with an interval of at least one month between doses. A fourth dose should be given after the first birthday.
Between 7 and 11 months	2 doses of vaccine, each of 0.5ml, with an interval of at least one month between doses. A third dose should be given after the first birthday, and at least one month after the second dose.
Between 12 and 23 months	2 doses of conjugate vaccine, each of 0.5ml, with an interval of at least two months between doses.

All children who have had conjugate vaccine should also be given a single dose of the 23-valent plain vaccine after their second birthday, as recommended in the Green Book. This will provide protection against the sero types of *Strep. pneumoniae* not covered in the Conjugate Vaccine. The minimal interval between conjugate vaccine and the 23-valent plain vaccine should not be less than eight weeks.

4. Prevenar is manufactured by Wyeth and supplies may be ordered through community pharmacies. Community pharmacies should order supplies of Prevenar direct from Wyeth Laboratories (Tel: 01628 604377). Similarly for hospital needs, supplies may be sourced directly from Wyeth.

Further information available from:

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Yours sincerely

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cc: Chair of General Practitioners Committee (NI), British Medical Association  
Chief Executives, HSS Boards and HSS Trusts  
Primary Care Medical Advisers, HSSB  
Prescribing Advisers, HSSB  
Pharmaceutical Contractors Committee  
Community Practitioners & Health Visitors Association  
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