

## MMR and Healthcare Staff

There can often be confusion amongst healthcare staff as to what immunisations are required for each category of healthcare and associated worker. There has also recently been a reported case of a healthcare worker in an ICU department who was thought to be the source responsible for transmission of the measles virus to an immuno-suppressed patient.

Occupational Health is primarily concerned with risk reduction and whilst there are no perfectly fail-safe mechanisms for ensuring absolute immunity from disease, it is important that staff working in a healthcare environment are immunised against Measles, Mumps and Rubella.

Current guidance is that all staff new to a healthcare setting who cannot provide evidence of two MMR vaccines should be routinely given two MMR vaccinations six to eight weeks apart, in addition to other job-specific immunisations and routine childhood vaccinations.

There has been much controversy over the MMR vaccine, much of it founded on heresy and rumour. Staff should be aware that the risk of not being immunised against MMR puts not only their own health, but the health of their patients at risk and there have been recent reports in the national media of increased incidence of measles outbreaks in some areas of the United Kingdom.

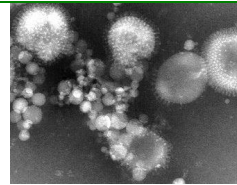
Two cases of measles were reported in the Midlands (Birmingham Evening Mail, 2 July 2008) and 700 cases in Lewisham, London, in 2007 (Health Protection Agency website 4 April 2008).

### Remember:

**Measles remains a particularly dangerous and potentially fatal disease.**

### BE WISE – IMMUNISE!

For further information, advice and support, please contact your GP, NHS Direct on 0845 4647, Occupational Health Adviser at any of our clinics or contact PTH Head Office directly on 01527 577242 for the most up-to-date immunisation guidance.



## Flu season is fast approaching!

Flu is a highly infectious illness which spreads very rapidly through coughs and sneezes of people who are already carrying the virus.

Flu immunisation (flu jab) gives you good protection from flu and lasts for one year. The vaccine is normally available in the autumn and is made from the strain of flu that is expected in the coming winter. In order to remain protected, you need to ensure that you have a flu jab every year.

### Why it should be done

Flu symptoms hit you suddenly and severely. They usually include fever, chills, headaches and aching muscles, and you can often get a cough and sore throat at the same time. Colds are less severe, and usually start gradually when you get a sore throat and stuffy or runny nose. Flu is a much more serious illness.

Catching flu is a nasty experience for most of us. However, for some people it can lead to serious illnesses like bronchitis and pneumonia and may require hospital treatment. Every winter, a large number of elderly people die from influenza.

### When it should be done

The best time to have a flu jab is in the autumn, between late September and early November. Don't wait until the winter when there's a flu epidemic.

The virus circulates every winter, usually over a period of a few weeks and, as a result, a lot of people get ill around the same time. In a really bad year, this can amount to an epidemic, but it's impossible to predict how much flu there will be every year.

### How it works

Your body starts making antibodies to the vaccine virus about a week to ten days after the injection and they help protect you against any similar viruses you then come into contact with.

Even though flu vaccinations will protect you against most flu viruses, they won't stop you catching the many other viruses that appear every winter. However, as flu is generally a more serious virus, it makes sense to get protected. The flu virus changes every year, so you need to have a flu jab annually to make sure that you are protected against the latest strain of the virus.

Modern flu immunisation does not usually cause problems. You may experience a slight soreness in your arm following the injection. Sometimes, it can cause mild fever and slight muscle aches for a day or so. There is no active virus in a flu vaccine so it can't cause flu. However, people sometimes catch other flu-like viruses, or very occasionally catch flu before the vaccine takes effect. Allergic reactions to the vaccine are rare.

### Cautions

You should not have the flu vaccine if:

- you have a serious allergy to hens eggs (very rare) this is because the vaccine is made from hens eggs
- you have had a previous allergic reaction to a flu vaccine (rare), or
- if you are pregnant and in a high risk group you should talk to your GP about having the jab. However, no problems have been reported in pregnant women who have had the jab.

For people who are usually healthy, a flu jab is not necessary because it is an illness that is uncomfortable but not serious

Source: NHS Direct, September 2008

## Health Awareness dates for the diary

### October

1-31 Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
[www.breastcancercare.org.uk](http://www.breastcancercare.org.uk)

1-31 Lupus Awareness Month  
[www.lupusuk.com](http://www.lupusuk.com)

1-31 Tuberos Sclerosis Awareness Month  
[www.tuberos-sclerosis.org](http://www.tuberos-sclerosis.org)

4-10 Back Care Awareness Month  
[www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk)

9 World Sight Day  
[www.vision2020uk.org.uk](http://www.vision2020uk.org.uk)

10 World Mental Health Day  
<http://www.mhf.org.uk>

12 World Arthritis Day  
[www.countmeincalendar.info](http://www.countmeincalendar.info)

31 Wear it Pink  
[www.wearitpink.co.uk/](http://www.wearitpink.co.uk/)

### November

1-30 Lung Cancer Awareness Month  
[www.roycastle.org](http://www.roycastle.org)

3-9 Psoriasis Awareness Week  
[www.psoriasis-association.org.uk](http://www.psoriasis-association.org.uk)

5 National Stress Awareness Day  
[www.nationalstressawarenessday.co.uk](http://www.nationalstressawarenessday.co.uk)

14 World Diabetes Day  
[www.idf.org](http://www.idf.org)

16-22 Mouth Cancer Awareness Week  
[www.mouthcancer.org](http://www.mouthcancer.org)

17-21 Indoor Allergy Week  
[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

### December

1 World AIDS Day  
[www.nat.org.uk](http://www.nat.org.uk)

1-31 Children's Cancer Month  
[www clicsargent.org.uk/](http://www clicsargent.org.uk/)

2 International Day of Persons with a Disability  
[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

## Flu Vaccinations

This year we will be booking Flu vaccinations on a 'no-return' basis, please call Gill Allardice with your requirements on 01527 577242 as soon as possible.



PTH is now a member of this highly respected trade organisation.

Since its formation in 2004, COHPA has become a prominent figure within the OH sector; providing a voice for members and driving key advances.

COHPA membership signifies a commitment to advancing the industry.



We are pleased to announce that we have now placed the order for our new occupational health software ORCHID. This software has been developed by CHI and our thanks to Neil from CHI who has been so helpful in evaluating the software against our specifications. We have developed plans for the implementation of the software and will be contacting our clients to discuss the timing of the transfer of their service to ORCHID.

This is a very exciting time for PTH as we look forward to being able to implement the benefits we know ORCHID will provide.



### National Stress Awareness Day – 5 November

According to a BUPA survey (2006) more than a third of the population find work their biggest worry and Monster's most recent poll of UK workers (2008) found that over half (84%) have trouble sleeping on Sundays because they are worrying about the working week ahead.

Stress Expert Ann McCracken, chair of International Stress Management Association says "Worry about work or personal life is insidious and is something we do to ourselves. Few people benefit from worry as it changes nothing and builds up anxiety and personal pressure. Eventually this can lead to stress".

Source: [www.nationalstressawarenessday.co.uk](http://www.nationalstressawarenessday.co.uk) – please visit this website for ideas and resources for your organisation to get involved in this event.