

Managing Childhood Immunisation Clinics

- best practice guidelines



Royal College
of Nursing

Immunisation programmes in the UK are one of the most successful public health strategies that are delivered by general practice nurses.

The current UK childhood immunisation programme has increasingly become more complex over the past decade. Children are scheduled to receive between 18-20 immunisations before their 18th birthday.

Evidence from the National Patient Safety Agency has shown that immunisation related errors form the largest part of serious adverse events in general practice. This best practice resource aims to provide a practical checklist to support the general practice nurse in managing a childhood vaccine and immunisation clinic.

All practitioners involved in immunisation should be able to demonstrate current, evidence-based and best practice-based knowledge and understanding in the areas listed below.

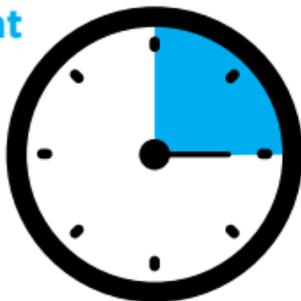
Core areas of immunisation knowledge

- 1 The aims of immunisation, national vaccine policy and schedules.
- 2 The immune response to vaccines and how vaccines work.
- 3 Vaccine preventable diseases.
- 4 The different types of vaccines, their composition and the indications and contraindications.
- 5 Current issues in immunisation.
- 6 Communicating with patients, parents and carers about vaccines.
- 7 Legal issues in immunisation.
- 8 Storage and handling of vaccines.
- 9 Correct administration of vaccines.
- 10 Anaphylaxis and adverse reactions.
- 11 Documentation, record keeping and reporting.
- 12 Strategies for optimising immunisation uptake.

Common vaccination errors

Insufficient appointment time allocated for vaccinations can lead to:

- confusion between siblings can result in the wrong child being vaccinated
- limited time to gain information regarding immunisations for immunosuppressed children leading to delays in vaccination or contraindicated vaccinations being given
- miscommunication between parents/guardians and GPN particularly in patients with limited English language skills
- little time to investigate children with uncertain or incomplete vaccination history.



Vaccine administration errors due to:

- vaccines with similar sounding names
- vaccines with similar looking packaging
- expired vaccinations remaining in fridge
- reconstitution errors
- vaccines given at the wrong time of the schedule
- vaccines given out of cold chain or incorrectly stored
- records of child not up to date, inaccurate, unclear, unavailable leading to either too many or too few vaccinations being administered
- vaccination errors in vulnerable groups such as the looked after child due to lack of accurate patient information.

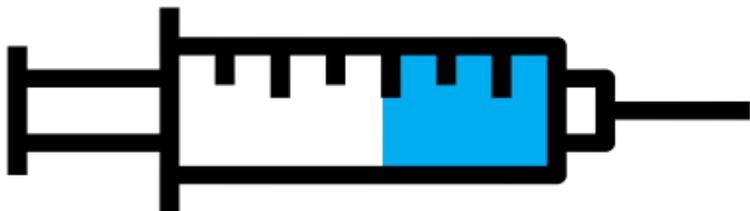
Remember your 8 Rs

Before giving a vaccine always check:

- 1 Right patient
- 2 Right vaccine and diluent (where applicable)
- 3 Right to give (ie, no contraindications)
- 4 Right time (including correct age and interval, as well as before the product expiration date)
- 5 Right dose
- 6 Right route (including correct needle gauge and length and technique)
- 7 Right site
- 8 Right documentation (to ascertain what the patient has already had/needs)

Preparing the vaccine

- Check the correct vaccine has been taken from the fridge.
- Please check the vaccine with the accompanying adult.
- Check expiry date.
- Ensure it is correctly reconstituted in accordance with the manufacturers guidelines.
- Do not draw up the vaccine prior to the consultation.

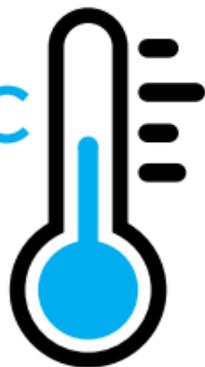


Vaccination ordering storage

- Plan vaccine ordering ahead to ensure sufficient stock for the next 2-4 weeks.
- Do not over stock the vaccine fridge.
- Follow your local policy on the management of vaccination fridges and cold chain protocol.
- Segregate vaccines within the vaccine fridge into childhood, adult and travel vaccinations. If possible have separate fridge for childhood vaccines.
- Arrange childhood immunisations within the fridge in line with the vaccination schedule.

2-8°C

Vaccines must be stored at temperatures between 2-8°C.



Top tips

Before you start

- Ensure appropriate appointment time is allocated for vaccinations, the average GPN appointment time is 10-15 minutes. We recommend best practice is a minimum of 20 minutes. However you may want to consider the number of vaccines required and where in the schedule the child is when allocating sufficient appointment time.
- Consider other factors in deciding the time required for appointments. For example, explaining the vaccines or the presence of interpreters.
- Consider running the clinic with support from a registered or non-registered colleague for help supervising siblings. Remember you are always accountable for your own documentation and contemporaneous record keeping is essential.

- Ensure you are up to date with immunisation training, including anaphylaxis.
- Make sure you have access to the relevant chapters of the Green Book.
- If you are not a prescriber ensure you are working from the most up to date PGD and this has been appropriately authorised and signed.
- Ensure the person with legal guardianship consents to the vaccine.
- Confirm the vaccinations that the child is attending for and in the presence of other siblings identify the correct child with a sticker if needed.
- For children outside of the national schedule refer to the flowchart for individuals with uncertain or incomplete immunisation status or your local health protection team or screening and immunisation team where there are doubts.

- Remember the 8 Rs.
- Ensure there is the ability to safely dispose of used sharps at the point of use.
- Check eligibility for the vaccines and any contraindications.
- Always have a current immunisation schedule available for reference.





If a vaccination error does occur, stay calm; explain what has happened and be open and honest with the parent/guardian. Obtain immediate advice from your supporting clinician and seek advice from your local immunisation team on an action plan/next steps. Generally, reassurance can be given that no immediate harm will come to the patient but vaccination with the correct vaccine will be required.

Reporting errors is an important way of reflecting on what went wrong and preventing further vaccination errors.

Resources

Further resources and country specific information can be found on the forum web page at www.rcn.org.uk/get-involved/forums/general-practice-nursing-forum

- www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code
- www.gov.uk/government/publications/routine-childhood-immunisation-schedule
- www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book

References

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