

Although we are making a second dose of varicella-containing vaccine universal for all patients through 18 years of age providers should focus on immunizing at:

- kindergarten entry (4-6 years)
- routinely scheduled adolescent visit (11-12 years)
- pre-college visit (17-18 years)
- in outbreak situations in schools (3 or more cases in the same school within a 21 day period).

Providers should keep in mind the proper spacing between doses of varicella-containing vaccine. If an individual has previously received a measles-containing vaccine (i.e., MMR), at least 1 month should elapse before administering a dose of MMRV. If a second dose of varicella containing vaccine (either varicella, or MMRV) is urgently needed, at least 3 months should elapse between administration of the two doses of the varicella-containing vaccines. The Immunization Program will continue to supply MMR and varicella vaccines individually, but providers should take every opportunity to use the combination vaccine whenever possible.

We anticipate that some providers will want to know in more detail the rationale for the new national two dose recommendation, and that there will be questions regarding individual situations such as the need for a second dose of varicella-containing vaccine for a child who was previously diagnosed with breakthrough disease and whether anti-varicella titers would be useful. The full ACIP recommendations that will provide the key evidence and rationale for the change in recommendations and how to deal with specific questions such as those raised above are expected to be published in the next 1-2 months. We will inform you when that information becomes available.

Storage and Handling

As a reminder, reconstituted MMRV must be discarded if not used within 30 minutes. This is different from varicella vaccine that can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 72 hours and from MMR vaccine that can be refrigerated for up to 8 hours after reconstitution. Please note this important difference. We recommend storage prior to reconstitution of all live virus vaccines (MMR, MMRV, and varicella) in the freezer at 5 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 15 degrees Centigrade) or colder to prevent damaging the vaccines through inadvertent refrigeration.

An updated Vaccine Eligibility Criteria as of January 1, 2007 is enclosed for your records.

As always if you have any questions, please call the Immunization Program at (860) 509-7929.