TO:   All Users of State Supplied Vaccines
FROM: Vincent Sacco, MS   James L. Hadler, MD, MPH
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DATE: January 2, 2007
SUBJECT: Expansion of Availability of MMRV and Varicella Vaccines to Meet New Routine 2nd Dose Recommendations

The primary purpose of this communication is to notify you of the availability of a second dose of publicly purchased MMRV and varicella vaccines for vaccination of any child or adolescent through 18 years of age regardless of insurance status.

Two-dose Varicella Recommendations
In late June, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted to recommend a second dose of varicella-containing vaccine for children 4 to 6 years of age to improve primary and long-term protection against chickenpox. The ACIP also recommended that children, adolescents, and young adults who previously received a single dose of vaccine be given a second dose of varicella-containing vaccine to assure full and lasting protection and to minimize the potential for sustained transmission in school settings. Catch-up vaccination can be implemented during routine healthcare visits, through school and college entry requirements or in the setting of sustained varicella transmission in schools in which all children have already received a first dose of varicella-containing vaccine. In the next few years, we expect to update our current school and college regulations to incorporate this new two-dose varicella recommendation. In order to facilitate catch-up vaccination for the second dose, we will be expanding the availability of state-supplied MMRV and varicella vaccines beginning January 1st.

Availability of Varicella and MMRV vaccine
Starting January 1, 2007, you can begin to use state-supplied varicella vaccine for the routine immunization of all patients up through 18 years of age who are in need of a second dose of vaccine. You can also begin to use state-supplied MMRV vaccine for dose number two for all children in your practice regardless of insurance status. As a reminder MMRV vaccine is only licensed for children 12 months-12 years of age.
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.