

1<sup>st</sup> February 2011

**IMPORTANT NEWS**  
**CONCERN OVER CHILDHOOD VACCINE UPTAKE RATES**

Dear Colleague

The most recent vaccine uptake rates (Q3 2010) collated by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre have shown a large drop in the reported numbers of children receiving their Hib booster as well as their 3<sup>rd</sup> doses of PCV and Men C vaccines. Whilst the national uptakes for diphtheria, polio, pertussis and tetanus at 24 months are 94% the uptake for the Hib booster is 84%, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> dose of PCV is 88% and only 80% for the 3<sup>rd</sup> dose of Men C vaccine.

This may be related to the introduction of the new schedule in 2008 with children not attending for the 5<sup>th</sup> visit at 13 months or to parents choosing to have some but not all of the vaccines recommended at the 12 and 13 month visits. There is also a suggestion that some children are not receiving three vaccines at their 6 month visit and are deferring one until their child is older.

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee has recommended the childhood schedule of vaccines be given at specific ages. This is to make sure babies are protected from serious diseases at the age when they are most vulnerable.

**Children who do not complete the full immunisation schedule are not fully protected against these serious diseases.** I would be grateful if you would highlight this to parents and stress the importance of all the vaccines being given at the correct age.

The National Immunisation Office is focussing on this issue particularly in the letters parents receive inviting them to make vaccination appointments and in the revision of information booklets and leaflets which will be sent to you shortly.

For your information I have included a checklist of tips which may help you. Frequently asked questions about the childhood schedule have also been updated on the national immunisation website at [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)

Yours sincerely



Dr Kevin Kelleher  
Assistant National Director of Population Health - Health Protection  
Medical Council Registration Number: 19719

## PRIMARY CHILDHOOD IMMUNISATION CHECKLIST

- Let parents know their child needs **5 visits** to ensure that they receive the full immunisation schedule and that they are fully protected against these important diseases.
- Remind parents of this at every opportunity.
- Adhere to the immunisation schedule – give all of the vaccines at the correct times.  
*(The National Immunisation Advisory Committee has recommended certain vaccines be given at specific ages to make sure babies are protected from serious diseases **at the age when they are most vulnerable**)*
- Give all three vaccines at the 6 month visit
  - give 6 in1 and Men C in the same limb (different sites and 2.5cms apart).
  - give PCV in the other limb.
- Send a text reminder prior to all appointments but especially the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> visit.
- Give an appointment for the 5<sup>th</sup> visit at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> visit.
- Follow up any defaulters as soon as possible.
- Make sure vaccine returns are sent to your local immunisation office on time.
- Defaulters need all the appropriate vaccines even if they are over the recommended age\*

\*[http://www.immunisation.ie/en/HealthcareProfessionals/Guidelinesforlateentrants/PDF/File\\_9494\\_en.pdf](http://www.immunisation.ie/en/HealthcareProfessionals/Guidelinesforlateentrants/PDF/File_9494_en.pdf)

**Remember 95% uptake is required for all childhood vaccines**