

HPV Vaccine: Give advice and help us save lives

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The HSE schools HPV vaccination programme starts again in mid-September, when the first dose of a two dose schedule will be offered to all girls in first year in second level schools. Information packs and consent forms will be distributed to parents of first year girls in the first few days of the school term.

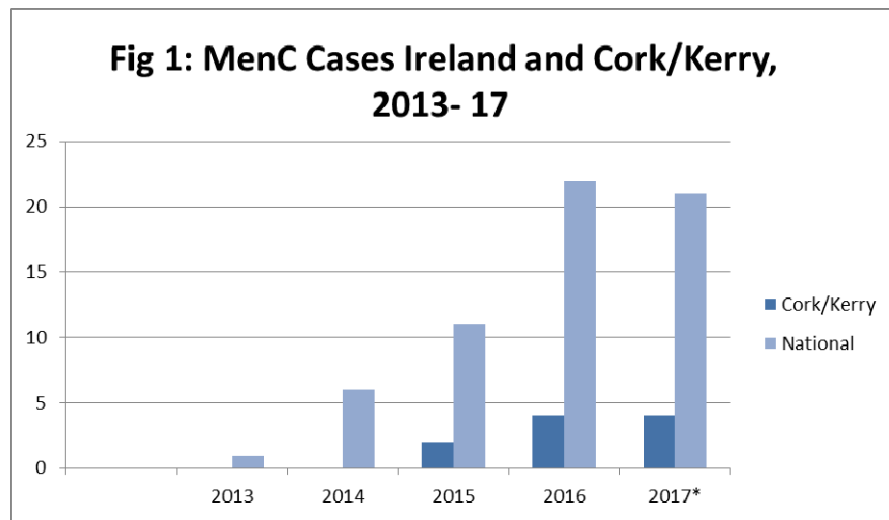
As health professionals, some of you may be asked for advice about the HPV vaccine. Please take the time to visit www.hpv.ie for a wide range of information including videos and fact sheets about the vaccine, how it saves lives and its excellent safety record.

We are asking you to help us to save lives by recommending the vaccine to those who seek your opinions and to recommend www.hpv.ie to friends, neighbours and colleagues who are seeking information about the HPV vaccine.

Meningococcal C (MenC): Increase in cases

Nationally, there has been an increase in MenC disease in Ireland since 2014. In 2013 there was only one reported case of MenC in Ireland compared to 21 cases up to the end of July this year. In Cork and Kerry we have seen an increase since 2015 (see figure 1).

Fig 1: MenC Cases Ireland and Cork/Kerry, 2013- 17



*2017 figures up to end of July

Since 2015 there have been 10 cases of MenC in Cork and Kerry, six of whom were adults aged over 50 years of age and four were aged under 23 years. Tragically, there were three deaths.

MenC Vaccination

Vaccination with MenC vaccine is the only way to protect against MenC disease.

The current MenC vaccine schedule is –

- ◆ MenC vaccine at 6 months and booster at 13 months, as part of the childhood schedule.
- ◆ MenC adolescent booster in first year second level schools – delivered by HSE school immunisation teams. This booster has been offered to first year students since the 2014/15 school year, so the coming school year is the fourth year of this programme.

Everyone up to 23 years of age needs at least one dose of MenC vaccine

Uptake of MenC vaccine

The most recent figures for MenC vaccine uptake for Cork and Kerry show that only 88% of children have completed the recommended schedule by age 24 months.

The uptake of the MenC booster in first year, second level school, was 87% for the school year 2015/16. The figures for the school year 2016/17 have yet to be finalised, as follow up clinics are held throughout the summer. However, early indications are that the uptake may be down by as much as 3-4%. Parental concerns regarding the HPV vaccine may be causing some parents to refuse all vaccines in the school vaccination programme.

How can you help?

Please take every opportunity to check that children are up to date with MenC vaccine according to the recommended schedule at six months and 13 months.

Please encourage parents to ensure their children get the MenC booster in first year in second level school. This adolescent booster is vital to provide protection to teenagers as the highest carriage rates for all meningococcal strains is in the late teens and early twenties, when up to 25% of them may carry some strain. A booster MenC will give them protection during these years when they are at increased risk. MenC vaccine not only protects the individual from getting invasive disease but also decreases the carriage of MenC strains in the nose and throat - thus decreasing the risk of passing it on to others.

Further information on this recent national increase in MenC disease is available at the following links:

<http://ndsc.newsweaver.ie/epiinsight/lk9zrk5w93l-13mf71unhv?email=true&a=2&p=52049220&t=17517804>

Flu vaccine

As summer ends and we head into autumn it is time to start thinking of annual flu vaccine for the “at risk” groups and for healthcare workers (HCW). Information will be going out to all GPs in September and deliveries of flu vaccine will commence in September.

Vaccination of healthcare workers is very important both for their own protection and the protection of their family and their patients. The National Immunisation Office has a very helpful FAQ, “Why flu vaccination is important for health care workers”, available on their website <http://www.hse.ie/eng/health/Immunisation/pubinfo/flu vaccine/infohcw/> This FAQ may be helpful in encouraging HCWs to take the flu vaccine.

Hepatitis A Outbreaks in men who have sex with men (MSM)

A number of outbreaks of Hepatitis A have been identified in Europe in MSM. Cases have also occurred in Ireland, with evidence of local transmission within the MSM population.

Vaccination (Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, or combined Hepatitis A/B, as appropriate) is recommended for MSM. The vaccine is available free in STI clinics, and student health services (there may be a fee in some services). In primary care, vaccine is free, but GPs may charge an administration cost.

If vaccine is required by a general practice for “at risk” MSM the vaccine can be ordered from the cold chain in the normal monthly order.

Further information on the Hepatitis A outbreak is available on the HPSC website

<http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/hepatitis/hepatitisa/news/>