

07 July 2016

Notice re BCG Vaccine Shortage

The BCG vaccination provides some protection against tuberculosis (TB). It is usually given to babies and children under five years old who may have an increased risk of being exposed to TB.

Unfortunately due to a worldwide shortage of the BCG vaccine there is currently no vaccine available in New Zealand. We do not know when the BCG vaccine will again be available in New Zealand but it is unlikely to be this year.

With no definite date for when the BCG vaccine will be available all BCG clinics across the Bay of Plenty District Health Board region have been stopped. We will not be providing a waiting list for BCG vaccinations.

LMCs and GPs should:

- continue to assess all neonates and new patients aged under 5 years for their risk of TB
- flag in their practice management system and/or medical records if an infant/child is at increased risk of TB (ie, meets the eligibility criteria for funded BCG vaccination) so that they can be referred for a BCG vaccination when vaccine is available again
- advise parents and caregivers of children at higher risk of TB exposure to seek medical advice if they have concerns about their child's health.

There is a very low risk of getting TB in New Zealand. However, if babies or young children are travelling to a country with high rates of TB or if visitors from countries with high rates of TB are staying in the same house as the baby or young child then there may be a risk of exposure. In these situations parents should be vigilant and ensure their children avoid exposure to anyone who is unwell with TB symptoms such as a cough that goes on for more than three weeks that occurs with constitutional symptoms such as loss of weight and night sweats. It is useful to be aware that, in New Zealand, all medical costs for investigation and treatment of TB are free to anyone who needs it.

As a general indication, the following areas have high rates of TB:

- most of Africa
- much of South America
- Russia and the former Soviet states
- the Indian subcontinent
- China, including Hong Kong; Taiwan (ROC)
- South East Asia (except Singapore)
- some Pacific nations (except the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau and Tonga).

Please **do not** refer babies/children to our service for BCG vaccination until the vaccine is available. We will advise you when the BCG vaccine becomes available again and the process for making a referral to our BCG clinic.

Yours sincerely



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