

Managing Childhood Immunisation Clinics

Best practice guidelines

This best practice resource aims to provide a practical checklist to support the general practice nurse in managing a childhood vaccine and immunisation clinic.

Immunisation programmes in the UK are primarily delivered by general practice nurses.

The UK childhood immunisation programme is complex. Children and young people are offered vaccines against 18–20 infectious diseases before their 18th birthday, the current UK vaccination schedule is here.

All practitioners involved in immunisation should be able to demonstrate current, evidence-based and best practice-based knowledge and understanding in accordance with the *National Minimum Immunisation Standards*.

Well organised, friendly and flexible vaccination clinics help to instil public confidence and maintain high coverage of vaccines. They also support parents in making sure their children have the vaccines they are due in a timely way.

The RCN immunisation web pages and *Practical and clinical guidance for vaccine administration* have more information.



Common vaccine errors

Immunisation-related errors are a significant part of all serious incidents reported in general practice.



- Confusion between siblings can result in the wrong child being vaccinated.
- Limited time to gain information regarding immunisations for immunosuppressed children leading to delays in vaccination or contraindicated vaccinations being given.
- Miscommunication between parents/guardians and GPN particularly in patients with limited English language skills.
- Little time to investigate children with uncertain or incomplete vaccination history.
- Vaccines with similar sounding names, or with similar looking packaging – leading to wrong vaccines being given.
- Expired vaccinations remaining in fridge.
- Reconstitution errors.
- Vaccines given at the wrong time of the schedule.
- Vaccines given out of cold chain or incorrectly stored.
- Records of child not up to date, inaccurate, unclear, unavailable leading to either too many or too few vaccinations being administered.

- vaccination errors in vulnerable groups such as the looked after child due to lack of accurate patient information.

Based on; *Immunisation errors reported to a vaccine advice service: intelligence to improve practice* (Lang et al., 2014)

What can be done?

Before giving a vaccine always check the 8Rs

(based on *Pediatric vaccination errors: Application of the “5 Rights” framework to a national error reporting database* (Shore et al., 2009).

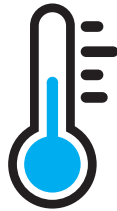
- 1 Right patient.
- 2 Right vaccine and diluent (where applicable).
- 3 Right to give (ie, no contraindications).
- 4 Right time (including correct age and interval, as well as before the product expiration date).
- 5 Right dose.
- 6 Right route (including correct needle gauge and length and technique).
- 7 Right site.
- 8 Right documentation (to ascertain what the patient has already had/needs).

Preparing the vaccine

- Check the correct vaccine has been taken from the fridge.
- Check the vaccine with the accompanying adult.
- Check expiry date.
- Ensure it is correctly reconstituted in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines.
- Do not draw up the vaccine prior to the consultation.

Vaccination ordering storage

- Vaccines must be stored at temperatures between 2-8°C.
- Plan vaccine ordering ahead to ensure sufficient stock for the next 2-4 weeks.
- Do not over stock the vaccine fridge.
- Follow your local policy on the management of vaccination fridges and cold chain protocol.
- Segregate vaccines within the vaccine fridge into childhood, adult and travel vaccinations. If possible have separate fridge for childhood vaccines.
- Arrange childhood immunisations within the fridge in line with the vaccination schedule.

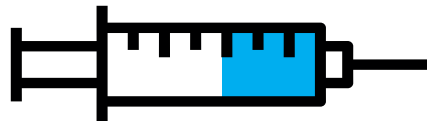


Avoiding and managing vaccine errors

The underlying reasons for vaccine errors are often attributed to insufficient time being allocated for vaccine appointments.

TOP TIPS - avoiding errors

- Ensure appropriate appointment time is allocated for vaccinations.
The average GPN appointment time is 10-15 minutes. We recommend best practice is a minimum of 20 minutes. Consider the number of vaccines required and where in the schedule the child is, more time may be required for some appointments and it is essential sufficient time is allocated.
- Consider other factors in deciding the time required for appointments. For example, explaining the vaccines providing information leaflets or links to further resources with appointment letters or texts or ensuring there are interpreters.
- Consider running the clinic with support from a registered or non-registered colleague for help supervising siblings.
Remember you are always accountable for your own documentation and contemporaneous record keeping is essential.



- Ensure you are up to date with immunisation training, including anaphylaxis.
- Make sure you have access to the relevant chapters of the Green Book *Immunisation against infectious disease*.

- If you are not a prescriber ensure you have the legal authorisation to administer medicines such as a prescription or PSD or have the most up to date PGD and this has been appropriately authorised and signed.
- Ensure the person with legal guardianship consents to the vaccine.
- Confirm the vaccinations that the child is attending for and in the presence of other siblings identify the correct child with a sticker if needed.
- For children outside of the national schedule refer to the flowchart for individuals with uncertain or incomplete immunisation status or your local health protection team or screening and immunisation team where there are doubts.
- Remember the 8Rs.
- Ensure there is the ability to safely dispose of used sharps at the point of use.

- Check eligibility for the vaccines and any contraindications.
- Always have a current immunisation schedule available for reference.



What to do if an error occurs

Stay calm; explain what has happened and be open and honest with the parent/guardian.

Obtain immediate advice from your supporting clinician and seek advice from your local immunisation team on an action plan and next steps.

Generally, reassurance can be given that no immediate harm will come to the patient but vaccination with the correct vaccine will be required.

Reporting errors is an important way of reflecting on what went wrong and preventing further vaccination errors.

Further resources

Further resources and country-specific information can be found on the RCN immunisation web pages at: www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/public-health/immunisation

The NMC Code is available at: nmc.org.uk/standards/code