



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
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March 6, 2009

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Universal Childhood Vaccine Distribution Program (UCVDP) Providers

**FROM:** Beth Rowe-West, R.N., B.S.N., Head  
Immunization Branch

**SUBJECT:** Update on Hepatitis B Vaccine Supplies

The purpose of this memo is to update providers regarding the current situation with hepatitis B vaccine supplies, and UCVDP hepatitis B ordering protocols over the next few months. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), both Merck and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) have recently experienced an inability to fill orders for pediatric hepatitis B vaccine, resulting in backorders. CDC has released doses from its monovalent pediatric hepatitis B vaccine stockpiles to each manufacturer to support private and public sector vaccine usage through March, 2009. Merck expects supplies of pediatric Recombivax HB® to be limited during the remainder of 2009 and does not expect to return to a full supply until some time in 2010. GSK expects to be able to meet the US market demand for monovalent Hepatitis B vaccine through the end of May with its pediatric hepatitis B vaccine (Pediatric Engerix-B®), and is working closely with CDC to determine how much additional monovalent hepatitis B product can be supplied to the US market during the second half of 2009.

**At this time, CDC has not recommended any changes in the vaccination schedule for pediatric hepatitis B vaccine.**

There are currently three pediatric formulations of hepatitis B vaccine available through UCVDP: Engerix-B® in syringes, Engerix-B® in vials, and Recombivax HB® in vials. According to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP), all three products may be used interchangeably as needed. Should a product become unavailable after a provider places an order, we will ship you the available product without notification. If vials are ordered and only syringes (which require more storage space) are available, we will call or fax the provider before making a substitution. Anytime a vaccine goes into backorder, and we are forced to make a substitution, it may cause short delays, resulting in hepatitis B vaccine being shipped separately from the rest of the order. We hope that this will be a rare occurrence.

Although the supply of pediatric hepatitis B appears to be adequate through May, **effective immediately, we are limiting orders to a three-month supply minus inventory.** Submitting an order for more than the suggested amount of pediatric hepatitis B may cause delays in processing your entire order.

You will receive additional information about hepatitis B vaccine supplies as we are made aware.

Questions regarding ordering vaccine should be addressed to the Help Desk at 1-877-873-6247.

Cc: SMT NC Immunization Branch Steve Shore Greg Griggs Maclyn Powell  
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