



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

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nyc.gov/health

*****PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO ALL PEDIATRIC, FAMILY PRACTICE AND OFFICE STAFF *****

August 23, 2007

Dear Colleague:

We have received an update from Merck about vaccine supply interruptions and delays for three of their vaccine products. A summary is provided below, along with suggestions on how you can address in your practice or office.

- **VAQTA[®]**: There is currently a 6-7 week delay in shipping of both pediatric and adult formulations of VAQTA, the Merck brand of Hepatitis A vaccine, because of a manufacturing change which is undergoing regulatory review. As a result, there is a significant back-order for shipping on current orders; orders for VAQTA placed in September are not expected to be available for delivery until the end of the first quarter of 2008.

Remedy: As an alternative, Havrix[®], (GlaxoSmithKline), is available and may be used interchangeably with VAQTA.

- **VARIVAX[®]**: Varicella vaccine is currently available in adequate supply, however there are shipping delays of up to 15-20 business days as a result of increased demand for this product. The manufacturer expects to be able to return to normal delivery schedules in the early fall.

Remedy: Assess your needs for vaccine and plan accordingly. Keep a month supply on hand. Do not do "just-in-time" ordering.

- **ProQuad[®]**: This combination of MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, rubella) and varicella vaccine is unavailable. There is no information at this time as to when this product will be available to order.

Remedy: Administer MMR and Varicella vaccines separately. These vaccines may be administered at the same visit at different injection sites, using separate needles and syringes.

Havrix, MMR and varicella vaccines are available for eligible children and teens through the Vaccines for Children Program; for information please call 212-447-8175. For those providers who purchase vaccine, Merck can be reached at 1-877-VAX-MERCK (1-877-829-6372) and GlaxoSmithKline at 1-866-GSK-VACC (1-866-475-8222).

All doses of any vaccine administered to children <19 years of age in New York City must be reported to the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR). For questions about the CIR, please call 212-676-2323.

For professional or technical questions, please call the Bureau of Immunization at 212-676-2259.

Sincerely,

Jane R. Zucker, M.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Immunization

Do not delay! Get your flu vaccine, immunize your staff and your patients once vaccine is available.