



Corporate Occupational Health & Safety Manual

3.21 IMMUNISATION

Guidance and Procedures

Introduction

Immunisation is one of the most effective healthcare interventions. Nonetheless, it must be seen as just one part of a wider policy to prevent transmission of infection. Immunisation should never be regarded as a substitute for good infection control practices, such as hand washing and universal precautions for the prevention of transmission of blood-borne viruses.

By definition, any vaccine preventable disease that is transmissible or poses a risk, the purpose of immunisation is to prevent the acquisition and transmission of vaccine preventable infection.

Legislation

All work except domestic employment is subject to the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Employers, employees and the self-employed have specific duties to protect, so far as is reasonably practicable, themselves, those at work and others who may be affected by their work activity, such as contractors, visitors and patients/clients.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess risks to staff and others, including young persons and new and expectant mothers, and to make appropriate health and safety arrangements.

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) (as amended) provide a framework of action designed to manage the risks from hazardous substances, including biological agents (pathogenic micro-organisms). Schedule 3 of COSHH and the Associated Biological Agents Approved Code of Practice refer specifically to work involving biological agents and the precautions which must be taken

Risk assessment

The Council will ensure through the risk assessment process that Managers carefully and systematically review what parts of the work could cause harm to employees and others who may be affected by their work activity. The risk assessment is to help make decisions about sufficient precautions to prevent the risk of ill health.

Where the risk assessment indicates that immunisation may be required as a control measure, the risk assessment should be forwarded to the Occupational Health Physician who will indicate in writing to the Manager if the employee should be offered immunisation.

A risk assessment should consider the following factors when assessing the infection risks to workers:

- The types of infection likely to be transmitted at the work;
- The possible sources of infection, for example, infected patients, their blood, body fluids and wastes, or contaminated environments and objects;
- The number of different sources of infection that staff may come into contact with and how often contact may occur;
- The control measures e.g. procedural controls, working practices, arrangements for the safe disposal of clinical waste, to protect employees;
- The need for suitable information, instruction and training for employees which will help them to prevent or reduce risk.

The risk assessment should only consider the infection risks arising from the work, not those that may be acquired by routine contacts with colleagues or friends and family outside of the workplace. The only exception would be where an infection may be acquired in the course of first-aid duties.

Immunisation as a Control Measure

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH) requires that if the risk assessment shows that there is a risk of exposure to biological agents for which effective vaccines exist; such vaccines should be made available unless the employee is already immune. Immunisation should only be seen as a useful supplement to reinforce procedural controls and the use of protective equipment, not the sole protective measure. Staff should be fully aware of the benefits and drawbacks of both vaccination and non-vaccination.

A record should be stored by The Occupational Health Department of any immunisations administered and the results of any checks on immunity. This information can be made available to the employee on request in writing.

Any further information or advice can be sought via the Occupational Health Department.