



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

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August 6, 2008

Dear Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program Participants:

### **Important Hib Vaccine Update and Ordering Instructions**

We are entering the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Hib vaccine shortage that was initiated by Merck's recall of their Hib-containing vaccines. We continue to hear that Merck's Hib-containing vaccines will be available during the fourth quarter of this year. Once that happens, the vaccine allocation system that we are currently using will change and more options will be possible.

As a result of the recall, Sanofi Pasteur is currently the only supplier of Hib-containing vaccine for the Nation. While the licensure of the combination vaccine, Pentacel, has enhanced the supply of Hib-containing vaccine, this addition is not sufficient to resume the booster dose of Hib vaccine.

The Florida VFC Program will continue to receive a limited supply of ActHib. However, the addition of the newly licensed Pentacel should assure our continued ability to provide infants with the first three doses of Hib-containing vaccine.

It is important to note that the Florida VFC Program will only be able to supply a limited amount of monovalent Hib vaccine until Merck resumes distribution of their Hib-containing product. Practices are encouraged to order Pentacel to supplement their monovalent Hib vaccine supply to assure infants receive the first three doses of Hib during this temporary shortage.

### **Incorporating Pentacel into the Immunization Schedule**

For practices using single-antigen vaccines, transition to Pentacel is relatively straightforward. These practices could begin using Pentacel as the first dose in the primary series for their two-month olds. Infants who have begun the Hib series with single-antigen vaccines can complete the series with separately administered DTaP, IPV, and Hib vaccines. An alternative is to switch all infants to Pentacel. See below for these options for single-antigen practices.

For practices using Pediarix (DTaP/IPV/HepB), the situation will be more challenging. Confusion and administration errors may result when both Pediarix and Pentacel are in use simultaneously in the same practice. These two combination vaccines include DTaP and IPV. However, Pediarix contains HepB and no Hib, and Pentacel contains Hib, and no HepB.

For practices incorporating Pentacel, it is easiest to begin with administration of Pentacel to their newborns, while infants already started on Pediarix should complete the series with Pediarix.

Inventory management will be challenging in a practice that uses both Pediarix and Pentacel, and may result in vaccine wastage if inventories are not monitored closely. The risk of children missing a dose of hepatitis B or Hib vaccine increases when both products are available.

VFC Program Participants

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If you have any questions concerning medical aspects of the vaccines or comments regarding the CDC recommendations, contact Phyllis Yambor, R.N., Bureau of Immunization, at (850) 245-4342. For information regarding the VFC Program vaccine supply, please contact Robert Griffin, VFC Program Coordinator, or your VFC Program Representative, at (800) 483-2543.

Sincerely,

Signature on file

Charles H. Alexander, Chief  
Bureau of Immunization  
Division of Disease Control  
Florida Department of Health

CHA/rg/ir  
Enclosures

cc: Phyllis Yambor, R.N., Executive Community Health Nursing Director,  
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