

## **IMMUNISATION UPDATE**

### **Introduction**

Although British Summertime (?) has just arrived in Worcestershire, we at Great Witley General Practice are thinking about the flu vaccination programme later in the year. We thought we would take this opportunity to remind readers of this of the existing immunisations and a couple of brand new ones that are to be introduced very soon.

The Doctors and Staff at Great Witley are very much in favour of immunisation as a safe and effective way of preventing serious illness in individuals and through the community. We of course understand that people do have concerns about immunisation and would wish patients to approach any of us with any specific concerns they may have.

### **Seasonal Flu Vaccination Programme**

The annual flu immunisation programme will once again commence in the autumn and our intention is to offer it to as wide a proportion of the 'at risk' population as is possible. Those typically considered to be most at risk are, everybody over 65, anyone over 6 months with chronic breathing disorders, heart disorders, kidney disorders, liver disorders, neurological disorders or diabetes, pregnant ladies at any stage of pregnancy, all residents of nursing homes or residential homes, carers and health and social care staff and other people who may have an underperforming immune system for whatever reason.

Walk-in clinics on 12.10.13. and 9.11.13

### **Pneumonia Vaccination**

The same 'at risk' group of adults as for flu are also recommended to have a one off pneumonia vaccination which helps to prevent the chance of catching one of the types of pneumonia caused by bacteria in the community. Some groups are advised to have booster vaccinations but would be advised by the healthcare professional at the time.

### **Seasonal Flu Vaccination for 2 and 3 year olds**

The NHS has recommended that the seasonal flu vaccination is now extended to all children aged between 2 and 17 years. Because of the large numbers of people in this age group, the programme will be introduced over a period of time commencing with 2 to 3 year olds. The remainder of the age range will be offered immunisations, probably through the schools, over the next couple of years. The vaccine to be used is called Fluenz and interestingly is administered as a nasal spray. One dose is all that is required for patients in the age range but not at risk and 2 doses are suggested for patients who are in the above 'at risk' group.

### **Shingles Vaccine**

Many of you will have heard of a condition called shingles. This is an unpleasant infection caused by the chickenpox virus and usually affects a single nerve on the body. Shingles cannot be caught from someone else. It is caused by a virus from a previous chickenpox infection becoming active again. In young people and healthy adults, it is often nothing more than an inconvenience but in older people it can be quite a severe and unpleasant illness. As such, the NHS has decided to offer a routine shingles vaccination for patients aged 70 and 79 from September 2013. The target age group will eventually be 71 to 79 years and there will be a catch up programme over the coming years. Anyone in this age group is entitled to this immunisation. The vaccine is called Zostavax and licensed only for adults over 50 and can be given at the same time as the seasonal flu immunisation. It is given as a single injection.

There are some other minor changes to the routine childhood immunisation programmes which parents of young children should discuss with their Health Visitor or other health care professional as appropriate.

*(Please note that the terms immunisation and vaccination are virtually the same).*