

Vaccinations for healthcare workers

Healthcare workers are advised to get vaccinated against the following diseases:

Hepatitis B is a viral infection that attacks the liver. People at risk are workers who are likely to come into contact with blood products, or are at increased risk of needlestick injuries, assault, body fluid splashes, etc. This may include nurses, doctors, dentists, medical laboratory workers and other staff working in wards where there is a risk of scratching or biting by patients.

Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus, which usually results in a high fever and rash, and can lead to blindness, encephalitis or death. Complications are usually more severe in adults who catch the virus.

Rubella is a viral disease which is usually mild in children, but infection during early pregnancy may cause foetal death or congenital rubella syndrome, which can lead to defects of the brain, heart, eyes and ears.

Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease caused by varicella zoster virus (VZV), which usually starts with a vesicular skin rash mainly on the body and head rather than on the limbs. Chickenpox is most infectious from one to two days before the rash starts, until all the blisters have crusted over (usually five to six days after the start of the rash). Healthcare workers could unknowingly pass it to someone they are treating if they become infected. Chickenpox is rarely fatal, although it is generally more severe in adult men than in women or children.

Tuberculosis is caused by bacteria belonging to the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex. Only the pulmonary form of TB disease is infectious, following prolonged close contact with an infectious case. TB is the leading cause of death among curable infectious diseases.

Seasonal influenza is a highly infectious and common viral illness spread by coughs and sneezes. It is the strain of the influenza virus that arrives in the UK each autumn. Complications of influenza include pneumonia and exacerbations of underlying pulmonary and cardiac disease. The actual strain varies from year to year and a new immunisation is developed each year to protect against the prevailing strain. The current influenza vaccines contain two different types of influenza A and one type of influenza B virus.

Other vaccines offered to at risk groups includes:

Tetanus which is caused by bacteria called *Clostridium tetani*. The bacteria can live in many different substances including soil, house dust and animal and human waste, such as manure. The tetanus bacteria usually enter the body through a wound in the skin or a serious burn. Once inside, they multiply and release a powerful type of poison, known as a neurotoxin. The neurotoxin disrupts the normal workings of the nerves, causing symptoms such as stiffness and muscle spasms.