

BCG vaccine update

January 2020 Update

Further to the previous update, the University has been informed in January 2020 that a new licensed vaccine has become available for our Occupational Health provider to order. Following receipt of the vaccine, staff will require additional training then a 'roll-out' programme will be arranged through the priority groups outlined in the original advice below. As such, it's anticipated we will re-commence vaccinating students in the 2020/21 academic year.

2017 Update

As an organisation, we, as well as Sheffield Teaching Hospital's 'Sheffield Occupational Health Service' (our Occupational Health Provider) are awaiting and reviewing guidance and updates from Public Health England relating to the current national and global BCG shortage situation. This includes guidance on if and when vaccines will become more widely available, which is expected to be 2017 at the very earliest.

Public Health England have classified Health Care Workers (including students) as low priority for vaccination as the risk of exposure still remains low for this group of individuals despite the hospital environment most work in. The clear advice published by Public Health England is where a health care worker or student is found to be tuberculin negative (these tests have been carried out for all students either at Pre-Course Days or post-enrolment medicals) and is eligible for BCG vaccination, vaccination is not required before that individual is cleared to work, as vaccination can be undertaken when further stock becomes available.

It should also be noted that the BCG vaccine does not guarantee protection against all TB strains regardless (as with any vaccine) of administration. There are a number of higher risk groups which have prioritised vaccination over health care workers when it does become available, including:

HIGHEST PRIORITY

- A. All infants (aged 0 to 12 months) with a parent or grandparent who was born in a country where the annual incidence of TB is 40/100,000 or greater.
- B. All infants (aged 0 to 12 months) living in areas of the UK where the annual incidence of TB is 40/100,000 or greater.
- C. Previously unvaccinated children aged 1 to 5 years with a parent or grandparent who was born in a country where the annual incidence of TB is 40/100,000 or greater.

MODERATE PRIORITY

- D. Previously unvaccinated, tuberculin-negative children aged from six to under 16 years of age with a parent or grandparent who was born in a country where the annual incidence of TB is 40/100,000 or greater.
- E. Previously unvaccinated tuberculin-negative individuals under 16 years of age who are contacts of cases of respiratory TB (following NICE recommended contact management advice).

F. Previously unvaccinated, tuberculin-negative individuals under 16 years of age who were born in or who have lived for a prolonged period (at least three months) in a country with an annual TB incidence of 40/100,000 or greater.

G. Previously unvaccinated, tuberculin-negative individuals under 16 years of age who are going to live or work with local people for more than three months in a country where the annual incidence of TB is 40/100,000 or greater.

There has been a shortage of the BCG vaccination nationally for approximately two years and the University has been working closely with Occupational Health and placement areas in managing risk without incident during this time. All NHS Trusts are aware of the current situation and Occupational Health departments and infection control teams within Trusts have reinforced their local TB infection control precautions and protocols for all staff (including students) with appropriate safety equipment available should there be a risk of TB infection. Students should reinforce with the placement supervisors their lack of BCG vaccination in the unlikely event of an incident.

Whilst we are aware of an unlicensed vaccine which has recently become available within the UK, this is still prioritised for high priority groups and will not be provided to health care workers (including students) currently in its unlicensed form without further guidance from Public Health England.

Please feel assured that we are closely monitoring the situation with Sheffield Occupational Health Service and should there be changes in any aspect of TB infection rates or BCG vaccination availability we shall review and amend any approach to student placements as necessary in order to maintain the protection of our students' wellbeing and protection of the general public.

1 <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng33/resources/tuberculosis-1837390683589>