

Temporary Pentacel Vaccine Shortage

There is a temporary shortage of the Pentacel vaccine all across Canada that is expected to last until November 2004. The Pentacel vaccine is used to prevent diphtheria, Haemophilus influenzae B (Hib), whooping cough, polio and tetanus. Due to the vaccine shortage, it may be necessary to postpone the timing of the booster needle given to five-year-old children.

Will my child still get this vaccine?

Yes - all NWT children will still get the booster shot. Priority is being given to babies, who get their regular Pentacel shot when they are 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, and 18 months old.

Why do older kids have to wait, when babies can have it now?

It is most important to give these shots to babies, who have not yet completed the primary series. Preschoolers have already had 4 shots of Pentacel, and the timing of the last booster is more flexible.

Why doesn't my nurse have enough vaccine?

This problem is affecting all of Canada for the next few months. The company that makes the vaccine is making more, but they must pass very strict tests to make sure the new supply is safe. This takes a while, but it keeps everyone healthy and safe.

What diseases does Pentacel prevent?

Pentacel is used to provide protection against five diseases:

- Diphtheria, which can cause infections and heart damage, make it hard to breathe, or cause death;
- Haemophilus influenzae B (Hib), which can cause serious infections like meningitis;
- Whooping cough (Pertussis), which causes severe coughing and can cause brain damage;
- Polio, which can cause paralysis, permanent disability and, in some cases, death;
- Tetanus, which can cause serious illness, and often, death.

Is it really important for my preschooler to get the last shot?

It is very important for your pre-schooler to have the last booster needle so that the protection they have against these diseases remains long-lasting. However, this short delay will not cause a problem for your child. As soon as the nurse has received the new vaccine supply, you will be contacted so that your child can get the last needle.

How will I know when the nurse gets more vaccine?

The nurses will let you know when the vaccine arrives.

Can my child still get other vaccines, like the ones that prevent measles or chicken pox?

Yes. You can still get all of the other vaccines your child needs. If you're not sure which shots your child needs, call your local public health office or health centre.

Where can I learn more?

Call your local public health office or health centre.