

Travel vaccines

There has traditionally been a lack of clarity regarding the provision and administration of travel vaccines and whether to charge patients prior to travel and for occupational reasons. Most misunderstandings of the regulations are due to the confusion between the clinical advice for when to administer a vaccine for travel (as set out in the Green Book) and the regulations indicating how GP practices are paid for the vaccines and their administration (as set out in the former Red Book).

This bulletin has been developed to assist practices receiving requests from patients for travel vaccinations, clarify national guidance on which vaccines may be prescribed on the NHS for the purposes of travel and which should be privately prescribed. Supporting data, a briefing and a patient information leaflet are also available here: <http://www.prescqipp.info/resources/viewcategory/263-travel-vaccines-drop-list>

Please note this bulletin does not cover the childhood primary immunisation schedule, national vaccination programmes (including catch-up programmes) and vaccination as indicated under the advice from Public Health England. Vaccines for use in these areas should continue to be provided on the NHS.

NHS patients are entitled to receive advice on recommended vaccines for travel and malaria prophylaxis free of charge.¹

Recommendations

- Vaccines for travel which are not allowed on the NHS should not be prescribed or supplied on an NHS prescription. Patients should be charged for these vaccines and any associated administration costs.
- Hepatitis B and Meningitis ACWY vaccines are not routinely commissioned under the NHS for travel purposes and these vaccines should be prescribed privately.²
- There is no funding within the GMS contract for hepatitis B for travel.
- The cost of different products for the same vaccine should be considered.
- Review current practice policy, and consider including recommendations around travel vaccines, ensuring all staff are updated to any changes in practice policy.
- Advice regarding vaccines needed for travel should continue to be provided, however the individual traveller will need to bear the cost of the vaccination.
- If vaccines are given as part of a national immunisation programme or for purposes other than travel, they may still continue to be provided on the NHS.

National guidance

The NHS England guidance on 'Items which should not routinely be prescribed in primary care'³ lists products that are regarded as low priority for funding, poor value for money or for which there are safer alternatives (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/items-which-should-not-be-routinely-prescribed-in-primary-care-guidance-for-cggs/>). Travel vaccines feature on the list as items that are clinically effective, however due to the nature of their use are not deemed appropriate for NHS funding if given solely for the purposes of travel. This bulletin does not discuss the use of these vaccines for purposes other than travel for which some vaccines may continue to be provided on the NHS.

Free travel vaccines

Certain vaccines are available on the NHS for travel as part of additional services under the General Medical Services (GMS) and Personal Medical Services (PMS) contracts – see below.⁴ Patients should not be charged a fee for these specified travel immunisations if a service is provided to registered patients. Practices can opt out of providing a travel vaccination service and refer patients to a travel clinic.⁵ These vaccines are usually free because they protect against diseases thought to represent the greatest risk to public health if they were brought into the country.⁵

The vaccines available on the NHS (if appropriate) are:

- Hepatitis A – including when combined with typhoid or hepatitis B
- Typhoid
- Tetanus, diphtheria and polio combined vaccine
- Cholera.

The vaccines for these are available at NHS expense in one of two ways:

- Purchased by the practice and personally administered, the payment is claimed through FP34PD.
- Obtained by the patient on FP10 prescription. A prescription charge is payable to the pharmacy unless the patient is exempt. In this situation no claim for personal administration fees should be made through FP34PD.

Private travel vaccines

The NHS does not remunerate the following immunisations for travel purposes:⁵

- Hepatitis B when not combined with hepatitis A
- Meningitis ACWY (quadrivalent meningococcal meningitis vaccine; A, C, Y and W135)
- Yellow fever
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Japanese B encephalitis
- Tick borne encephalitis
- Rabies.

The practice may therefore charge a registered patient for the above vaccines if requested for travel. The patient may either be given a private prescription to obtain the vaccines, or they may be charged for stock purchased and held by the practice. The process of administration of the vaccine is also chargeable. Practices should give the patient written information on the immunisation schedule proposed and the charges involved at the outset of the process. An FP10 (or equivalent NHS prescription) must not be used to provide these vaccines for the purposes of travel.

Hepatitis A & B as a combination vaccine can be prescribed as a travel vaccine on the NHS as it contains hepatitis A. However, as the NHS does not commission hepatitis B as a travel vaccine, local policy should be agreed on whether hepatitis A and B combined vaccine can be prescribed on the NHS for travel or whether the hepatitis A alone can be prescribed on an FP10 and hepatitis B vaccine should be given and charged as a separate private vaccination. The clinical benefits of hepatitis B immunisation are clear, but there is less clarity in the understanding of the regulations covering hepatitis B immunisation for the purposes of travel.^{2,4} It is up to the prescriber to decide whether they wish to adhere to local policies. Product shortages will affect local policies.

The BMA states that giving hepatitis B immunisation to patients who are travelling but where it is not indicated in the Green Book is inappropriate and wasteful of resources, however funded.²

Private provision

The ambiguity on when to supply travel vaccines under the NHS or privately stems from the regulations regarding the charging of patients that are registered with the practice. Schedule 5 of the NHS regulations leaves the decision as to whether the practice levies a charge or not to the discretion of the GP practice.⁴ The regulations do not impose any circumstances or conditions as to when these immunisations should be given on the NHS or as a private service. Practices have to ensure that their policy is non-discriminatory and that this does not contravene the Equality Act 2010 (formerly the Disability Discrimination Act).⁶

For travel vaccines not available on the NHS, a charge may be levied for:⁴

- The vaccine
- Administration
- Private prescription writing.

The level of charges should be determined by the practice, it is advisable to develop practice guidance which is clearly available for patients in the form of a leaflet or section of the practice leaflet or website.

Patients should be advised to compare prices as there may be variation in the amount that individual pharmacies will charge to supply the vaccine. Alternatively, practices may choose to buy in the vaccine directly and charge patients for the cost of the vaccine. Possible charges after vaccination include:

- Post-vaccination serological testing in the case of Hepatitis B administration, if performed for travel reasons.
- Provision of certification of immunisation (for example, confirmation of Meningitis ACWY135 administration).

Costs

Cost of individual products as stated in the BNF are shown in table 1. The lowest cost product or combination should always be supplied unless there is a clinical reason not to do so.

£1.06 million is potentially spent on travel vaccines that should not be prescribed on the NHS and can be prescribed privately if required by patients for travel. This equates to £1,792 per 100,000 patients. This savings figure assumes a local commissioning policy not to prescribe Hepatitis A and B combined vaccination on the NHS.

The accompanying data pack shows prescribing data at CCG level and annual savings available for each CCG. The spend on the vaccines has been apportioned for travel and is an estimate.

Summary

Table 1 on the following pages clarifies the availability on the NHS for each vaccine for travel. It shows the current BNF cost per vaccine and other potential charges. Vaccines not provided on the NHS should continue to be recommended for travel but the individual traveller will need to bear the cost of the vaccination.

Resources for further information

Further information on which vaccinations are necessary or recommended for the areas patients will be visiting are available on these websites:

- Fit for Travel - www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk
- National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) - <https://nathnac.net/>
- Travax - <http://www.travax.nhs.uk/>
- Green book - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book>
- Travel Health Pro - <https://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/>

Further information on individual vaccines is available from the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) available at www.medicines.org.uk

Some countries require an International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP) before you enter. Currently, under International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005), yellow fever and poliomyelitis are the only vaccinations that can be recorded in an ICVP. Country requirements are subject to change at any time. It is important for travellers to ensure that they know the requirements of the country to which they are travelling by checking with the relevant consulate or embassy. The latest updates received by the WHO from countries can be found on the WHO International Travel and Health web site.⁷

Table 1 - Travel vaccines available/not available on the NHS.

Please note some vaccines not available on the NHS for travel can still be given on the NHS if for indications other than travel.

| Vaccine | Available on NHS for travel ⁴ | Price per dose BNF ⁸ | Potential charges |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) | NO | No NHS indicative price available | Referral to a respiratory clinic is recommended for tuberculin testing and follow up for all patients requesting vaccination. |
| Cholera | YES - The vaccine is not indicated for most travellers. | Dukoral oral suspension® £26.35 (2 dose pack) | NONE |
| Diphtheria/tetanus/polio | YES - Stock centrally funded by the Department of Health as part of the childhood immunisation programme must NOT be used for the purposes of travel. | Revaxis® prefilled syringe £6.50 | NONE |
| Hepatitis A | YES | Havrix Monodose® prefilled syringe/vial £22.14 Havrix Junior Monodose® prefilled syringe/vial £16.77 Vaqta® Adult 1-mL prefilled syringe/vial £18.10 Vaqta® Paediatric prefilled syringe £14.74 Avaxim® prefilled syringe £18.10 | NONE |
| Hepatitis A/typhoid | YES - Hepatitis A/Typhoid available on NHS, booster dosage not aligned so consider separate vaccines. | Hepatyrix® prefilled syringe £37.21 ViATIM® prefilled syringe £29.80 | NONE |

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| Vaccine | Available on NHS for travel ⁴ | Price per dose BNF ⁸ | Potential charges |
|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Hepatitis A & B | <p>Combined hepatitis A and B immunisations for travel must always be given on the NHS.</p> <p>Local policy may be agreed about whether the combination product should be given for travel purposes.</p> | <p>Twinrix® Adult 1-mL prefilled syringe £33.31</p> <p>Twinrix® Paediatric (15 years and under only) prefilled syringe £20.79</p> <p>Ambirix® (15 years and under only) prefilled syringe £31.18</p> | NONE |
| Hepatitis B | <p>Hepatitis B vaccine alone is not remunerated by the NHS for the purposes of travel.</p> <p>Supplies may be limited due to shortages.²</p> | <p>Engerix B® 20mcg/ml prefilled syringe £12.99</p> <p>Engerix B 10mcg/0.5ml prefilled syringe (15 years and under only) £9.67</p> <p>Engerix B® 20mcg/ml vial £12.34</p> <p>Fendrix® 20mcg/0.5ml prefilled syringe £38.10</p> <p>HBVAXPRO® 10mcg/ml prefilled syringe £12.20</p> <p>HBVAXPRO® (5mcg/0.5ml prefilled syringe (15 years and under only) £8.95)</p> <p>HBVAXPRO® (40mcg/ml) vial £27.60</p> | <p>Private prescription</p> <p>Cost of vaccine</p> <p>Administration</p> <p>Serological testing</p> |
| Japanese Encephalitis | NO | <p>Ixiaro® suspension for injection 0.5ml pre-filled syringe £59.50</p> | <p>Private prescription</p> <p>Cost of vaccine</p> <p>Administration</p> |
| Meningococcal – meningitis ACWY | <p>ACWY can be prescribed on an FP10 (not blacklisted) however there is no remuneration for giving it as a travel vaccine on the NHS.</p> | <p>Menveo 0.5ml vial £30.00</p> <p>Nimenrix 0.5ml pre-filled syringe £30.00</p> | <p>Private prescription</p> <p>Cost of vaccine</p> <p>Administration</p> <p>Certification</p> |
| Rabies | NO | <p>Rabipur® 1ml pre-filled syringe/vial £34.56</p> <p>Rabipur® 1ml vial £34.56</p> <p>Rabies vaccine powder and solvent for suspension for injection 1ml £40.84</p> | <p>Private prescription</p> <p>Cost of vaccine</p> <p>Administration</p> |

| Vaccine | Available on NHS for travel ⁴ | Price per dose BNF ⁸ | Potential charges |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|
| Tick-borne encephalitis | NO | TicoVac® 0.5ml prefilled syringe £32.00 TicoVac Junior® 0.25ml prefilled syringe £28.00 | Private prescription Cost of vaccine Administration |
| Typhoid | YES | Typhim Vi® 0.5ml prefilled syringe £9.30 Typherix® 0.5ml prefilled syringe £9.93 Vivotif vaccine gastro-resistant capsules £14.77 | NONE |
| Yellow fever | NO Only available at designated Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre. | Stamaril 0.5ml vial £33.10 Stamaril £33.10 | Specialist centres only Information available via http://nathnacyfzone.org.uk/search-centres |

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Information compiled by Rakhi Aggarwal, PrescQIPP CIC, June 2018 and reviewed by Katie Smith, Senior Medicines Evidence Reviewer, July 2018. Non-subscriber publication November 2018.

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