



Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Eric E. Whitaker, M.D., M.P.H., Director

525-535 West Jefferson Street • Springfield, Illinois 62761-0001 • www.idph.state.il.us

January 1, 2007

Dear Colleague:

On January 1, 2006, Public Act 94-0614, Mercury-Free Vaccine Act, became effective. This Act requires vaccines to be mercury-free except for trace amounts, but provides in the statute a means for the Department to evaluate and assess the needs of Illinois citizens to have access to vaccines. The Illinois Department of Public Health has filed a statewide Declaration of Exemption on behalf of public and private health care providers for the following vaccines affected by the Act: Japanese Encephalitis, DT, Td, TT and Meningococcal Polysaccharide vaccine.

- **Japanese Encephalitis Vaccine**

Japanese Encephalitis Vaccine (JEV) contains thimerosal in quantities greater than trace amounts. Based upon information provided by vaccine suppliers, all currently manufactured JEV contains thimerosal in quantities greater than trace amounts and there are no plans by the manufacturer to change its formulation. JEV will be available for use in persons traveling to areas where Japanese Encephalitis is epidemic or endemic. A new formulation, in accordance with Public Act 94-0614 is currently not available from the manufacturer. Thus, the Illinois Department of Public Health has determined that JEV should be included in the Declaration of Exemption from P.A. 94-0614.

- **Combined Tetanus-Diphtheria Vaccines**

Based upon information provided by the vaccine manufacturer sanofi, Td Vaccine is available in a single-dose, pre-filled, preservative-free formulation. However, the thimerosal-free formulation is more costly for health care providers and not as readily available as the thimerosal-containing product, which contains thimerosal in excess of 1.25 micrograms of mercury per dose. Therefore, due to the immunization requirements for booster doses in secondary and post-secondary education, the Department has determined that this vaccine shall be declared exempt from the mandates of the Mercury-Free Vaccine Act.

- **Tetanus Toxoid**

Private providers in Illinois purchase and administer tetanus containing vaccines, including tetanus toxoid, referred to as TT and Diphtheria-Tetanus vaccine, referred to as DT vaccine. It is not possible to determine availability of

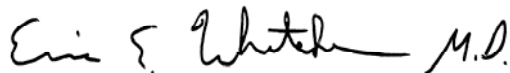
current usage of any preservative-free products to address private provider practice needs. TT vaccine is purchased by health care providers and hospitals for use in wound management. These products currently contain preservatives in excess of 1.25 micrograms and must be exempted to assure protection of those requiring these products according to physician's medical judgment.

- **Meningococcal Vaccine**

Multi-dose Meningococcal vaccine (MPV) is currently produced in a single dose and multi-dose presentation. The multi-dose presentation exceeds 1.25 micrograms of preservative. In the event of an outbreak of meningococcal disease (i.e., in a university setting), it is critical to provide protection for at-risk individuals without delay. Delays in procuring a preservative-free formulation may result in illness and death among exposed individuals, when multi-dose MPV is readily available. Therefore, the Illinois Department of Public Health has determined that the multi-dose presentation of MPV must be included in the exemption of the Act.

The Illinois Department of Public Health supports efforts to ensure vaccine safety. It has been committed to using preservative-free vaccines for its Vaccines for Children programs, beginning in 1999. However, for the reasons cited above for specific vaccines, it is imperative that the people of Illinois continue to have access to life-saving vaccines when necessary, without potential compromise to health and safety. If you have questions about this Declaration of Exemption, please contact Marilyn Thomas, Chief Counsel, 217-782-2043 or TTY (for hearing impaired use only) 800-547-0466. For questions about Illinois immunization requirements, please contact Karen McMahan, Immunization Program Administrator, 217-785-1455.

Sincerely,



Eric E. Whitaker, M.D., M.P.H.
Director

Attachment