

Imperial Neonatal Service

Standard operating procedure - Referral pathway for COVID-19 vaccination for parents caring for their baby in the neonatal unit

Standard operating procedure, ICHNT Version 1.0, 24th March 2021

Purpose:

To facilitate vaccination of parents who are caring for their vulnerable baby in the neonatal intensive care units working closely with the neonatal team for extended length of hospital stay

Background:

The JCVI (Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation) has included eligible unpaid carers on the vaccination priority list (UK wide) in priority cohort six (March 2021). Given the very high risk of exposure to infection and outbreaks in institutional settings, vaccination may be considered for carers who spend extended time in specialised intensive care settings with their children with complex needs.

Rationale

Neonatal services present a unique situation and it is essential that the mother and her partner are never considered to be visitors within the neonatal unit – they are partners in their baby's care and their presence and involvement in care have long term benefits for the baby. Many babies on the neonatal unit born prematurely have an extended length of stay in the neonatal unit potentially up to 6 months.

During the pandemic it was recommended by BAPM/ BLISS that the same arrangements should be offered to parents as are applied to staff, in order to minimise unnecessary separation and risk of transmission (for testing, PPE or potentially vaccination).

Imperial Neonatal units have a strong ethos of Family Integrated Care, and parents are involved in shared decision making about their baby's care on the daily ward rounds, parents are present for significant time of day delivering care to their baby working closely with the neonatal team, while maintaining social distancing and wearing the same PPE.

The benefits of extended parental contact, including skin to skin care and active involvement in their baby's care are well documented, as are the long established advantages of breast feeding. There is growing data that separation and limited access to their baby during the SARS CoV-2 pandemic has a detrimental effect on parental mental health, bonding and breastfeeding outcomes.

There are also publications now stating that vaccination of the mother breastfeeding resulted excretion of antibodies to the breastmilk

Inclusion criteria:

Parents who meet the following criteria will be offered a referral to the Imperial COVID vaccination programme

- a) parents of a baby born at less than 30+0 weeks gestation and admitted to the Neonatal Unit at ICHNT
- b) parents of a baby with underlying medical condition with expected length of stay > 3 weeks in neonatal care

Process:

- Eligible parents will be offered referral to the Imperial COVID vaccination programme.
- It remains the parent's choice as to whether to take up the offer of vaccination. Their decision will not impact on their involvement in their baby's care.
- Parents should be offered referral for vaccination as soon as possible after they are identified as eligible.
- Once parents have made a decision to take up the offer a referral will be made to one of the Trusts vaccination centres (SMH, HH) in email
- Neonatal ward clerks can help that their hospital number and NHS number is available for the referral
- The GP will be informed that the parents have been referred for vaccination (GP letter proforma)
- Administration will be documented on NIVS (by the vaccination centre) and referring clinician will document the communication with parents in BadgerNet EPR.
- The parents will automatically be called for a second dose by the vaccination centre

Referring patients:

- To refer patients contact imperial.covidvaccinationprogramme@nhs.net with the information below:
- Copy the referral email to imperial.neonatalsecretaries@nhs.net
- If multiple parents are to be referred please send all referrals in a single email.

Name of referring consultant:	Specialty: Neonatology	Patient (parent) name:
Hospital number: NHS Number:	Date of Birth:	Contact details for patient:
Diagnosis and eligibility criteria:		
Further information:		

Neonatal Intensive Care Units

Imperial Neonatal Services

Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital site Extn 35369

St Mary's Hospital site Extn 35200

Date of letter:

Dear Doctor

Re

Mother's name:
NHS number:
DOB:

Birth partner's name:
NHS number:
DOB:

The above patients have their baby admitted to the neonatal unit and he/she will require specialised inpatient neonatal care for an extended period. The parents are actively involved in the baby's care.

Given the very high risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 infection and outbreaks in institutional settings, vaccination may be considered for carers who spend extended time in specialised intensive care settings with their children with complex needs.

As the JCVI (Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation) has included eligible unpaid carers on the vaccination priority list (UK wide) in priority cohort six (March 2021), our organisation was able to offer COVID vaccination to a selected group of parents caring for their baby in the neonatal unit.

We would like to inform you know that the above parents were referred to the Imperial COVID vaccination programme.

Yours faithfully

Name

Consultant Neonatologist

Copy to: GP
Parents' CERNER notes