

# Patient briefing



## Notice

29 April 2005

### Understanding NPSA and MHRA advice

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) helps the NHS provide safe healthcare for everyone. This information explains advice from the NPSA and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) about the Repevax and Revaxis vaccines and making sure the right one is given to children.

## Ensuring safer practice with Repevax<sup>®</sup> and Revaxis<sup>®</sup> vaccines

Repevax<sup>®</sup> is a pre-school booster vaccine that protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio.

Revaxis<sup>®</sup> is a teenager booster vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria and polio.

Both of these vaccines are safe and effective. However, children have been given the wrong one because the two vaccines have similar names, labels and packaging.

Although mix-ups are rare, in a recent report to the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) 93 children were vaccinated with Repevax instead of Revaxis. There have also been reports to the NPSA of healthcare staff nearly giving the wrong vaccine.

**This information has been written for parents who are informed their child has been given the wrong vaccine.**

### What happens if a mistake is made

If a teenager is given Repevax instead of Revaxis, they will have received immunisation for diphtheria, tetanus and polio. They will also have received a dose of the whooping cough vaccine that is usually recommended for pre-school children. However, it is unlikely that they will have been harmed as a result.

If a pre-school child is given Revaxis instead of Repevax, they will have been vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and polio, but not against whooping cough. However, a single whooping cough vaccine is not available, so to protect against whooping cough a dose of Repevax may be offered to your child. Your doctor or nurse will talk to you about this.

If you have any concerns about the vaccine your child has been given, please ask the person responsible for their treatment.



### What is the NHS doing about it?

The packaging of Repevax and Revaxis vaccine will be changed to make it easier for staff to tell the two vaccines apart.

The NPSA and the MHRA have told all NHS organisations in England and Wales to do the following things.

Some organisations may already be doing these things:

- 1 Ensure procedures are in place to make sure that staff select the right vaccine for your child.
- 2 Make sure staff know that the packaging of these vaccines will change.
- 3 Look at how they store and manage vaccines and strengthen procedures where necessary.
- 4 Continue to report to the NPSA any problems where medicine products could be confused. If a child has a reaction to a vaccine, staff should report this to the MHRA.

### More information about the vaccines

Repevax is a pre-school booster recommended to be given between the ages of three years four months and five years. It protects against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio.

Revaxis is a teenage booster and a vaccine for children aged ten and over who have not previously received any form of immunisation. It protects against tetanus, diphtheria and polio.

### Further work by the NPSA and the MHRA

The NPSA and the MHRA are continuing to work with the pharmaceutical industry to make the design of medicine products safer, and therefore reduce the risk of mistakes being made because products look alike or have similar sounding names.

### More information

If you would like more information about the vaccines that you or someone you know is being given, please ask one of the people treating you. You can also call NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

The version of this information sent to NHS staff is available from the NPSA website at [www.npsa.nhs.uk/advice](http://www.npsa.nhs.uk/advice)

For more information on the NPSA, visit [www.npsa.nhs.uk](http://www.npsa.nhs.uk)

For more information on the MHRA, visit [www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk)