Global Shortage of Hepatitis B Vaccine
Update for Immunisation Providers and Health Care Workers

In June 2017, SA Health released information to advise of a global shortage of hepatitis B vaccine, which is updated in this document.

Supplies for the National Immunisation Program have not been affected, and SA Health is continuing to supply vaccine for the high risk hepatitis B program, and the birth dose and primary course for neonates and infants through the Immunisation Section, Communicable Disease Control Branch. Hepatitis B vaccine is also available for the management of post-exposure situations where a significant exposure has occurred.

The adult and the childhood formulations of hepatitis B vaccine (Engerix-B®) are currently available in the private market, as well as the combination hepatitis A - hepatitis B vaccine (Twinrix®). Shortages of some hepatitis B formulations continue at this time and may not be available until 2021. Details on the availability of hepatitis B vaccines can be accessed in the Therapeutic Goods Administration Medicine Shortages Information Initiative.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) released detailed advice on the use of hepatitis B vaccines during supply shortages. This advice should be read in detail before offering vaccination, but the main points are summarised here:

For health care workers aged < 20 years, a 3 dose course of paediatric hepatitis B vaccine or a 3 dose course of Twinrix (adult) is recommended, as currently detailed in the online Australian Immunisation Handbook.

For adults aged ≥ 20 years requiring completion of a hepatitis B course, the standard 3-dose schedule should not be altered. If adult formulation is not available, each of the doses can be substituted with:

- two concurrent doses of paediatric formulation (0.5mL per dose), OR
- an adult dose of Twinrix.

The ATAGI advice also provides recommendations for adolescents aged 11-15 years requiring catch-up of hepatitis B vaccine.

For SA Health services, where vaccine is in short supply, the highest priority will be given to Health Care Workers (HCWs) in Category A work roles (direct contact with blood or body substances) in higher risk settings such as Emergency Departments, Operating Theatres, renal dialysis units or the South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS).

To minimise disruption to the delivery of health care services in SA Health, and to minimise the impact on student HCWs who are required to undertake clinical placement in SA Health services as part of their training, student HCWs, prospective employees, contract and volunteer HCWs may work in SA Health services provided they have received at least one dose of hepatitis B vaccine, are aware of the need to complete the course of vaccination
as soon as supplies are available, and have been fully informed of management in the event of a blood or body fluid exposure.

For further information see www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisationprovider.