

## **VACCINATION IN THE ARMED FORCES – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

### **Duty of Care**

As part of your Service in the Armed Forces, you may have to work in locations where there is a higher risk of catching infectious diseases. The Armed Forces has a duty of care to protect you from diseases which can be avoided and will offer you a number of vaccines, where available, during your Service career to achieve this.

### **Purpose of vaccination**

Vaccines are some of the safest medical products available to protect against infectious diseases that can be prevented. Over the years they have helped save millions of lives. Vaccines protect you from diseases caused by germs which can cause serious harm and, in some cases, death. You could catch these germs in many ways – by insect or animal bites, contaminated food or water, they could be passed from one person to another and some could be released intentionally as biological weapons.

It is possible that you have already had some vaccines, especially if you grew up in the UK which has the NHS childhood immunisation programme, or as travel vaccines for visits abroad. When you enter military training, you will be offered vaccines which you might have missed in your childhood or if there is no proof in your medical record that you had these. You will also be offered some which protect you from infections that you are more likely to catch when you are posted abroad for training or service.

You may already have been asked to get your vaccination history from your Doctor, or will be asked soon. This is done so that you are not given vaccines again if you have already received them. If you or your Doctor are not sure which vaccines you have had, do not worry. Vaccines will not harm you if given again.

### **When will I be offered the vaccines?**

The vaccines will be offered to you during Phase 1 of your military training, with any remaining ones offered in Phase 2. Once you finish training, some vaccines will be offered during your career depending on your role or before you are posted to certain locations.

### **Are there any side effects of vaccines?**

Although all vaccines have the possibility to cause side effects in some people, most are mild and don't last longer than a few days. Many people don't get any side effects at all.

The most common side effects include some pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, mild fever, headache and fatigue. An immediate and serious allergic reaction, known as anaphylaxis, is very rare and happens in less than one in a million cases.

If you ever had a serious reaction to a vaccine in the past, you must tell your clinician when you are offered a vaccine.

### **What happens on the day I receive my vaccines?**

You will be seen by a clinician, usually a nurse, who will check your vaccination history to identify which vaccines you need. You will be given information on the vaccines by the staff and you will

also have a chance to ask questions before being vaccinated. You should tell a member of staff if you have a medical condition or are not well on the day. They will be able to advise whether vaccination should continue on the day or should be postponed.

### **What happens if I refuse vaccination?**

The vaccination programme is voluntary and you will not be forced to have any vaccines if you refuse. Vaccines have a strong safety record and are very successful in protecting people from diseases for which they are given. They are strongly advised to protect you and to help you remain fit and healthy. Refusing vaccination could have an effect on the roles you are able to do and the locations you can safely work in during your military career. This in turn can affect your employability. In the event that you refuse vaccination your clinician will inform your Chain of Command so that you can be managed in the right way.

### **Which vaccines will I be offered?**

The full list of vaccines that may be offered during your military training and career is given in the following table. Please note that this does not mean you will be given all these vaccines. What you need will depend on your role and previous vaccination history.

<b>Vaccines offered to most recruits in training</b>	<b>Vaccines offered during career</b>
Hepatitis A	Anthrax
Hepatitis B	Cholera
Human Papillomavirus or HPV (only females)	Seasonal influenza
Low-dose diphtheria/ Tetanus/ Inactivated Polio (Td/IPV)	Japanese Encephalitis
Meningitis ACWY	Pneumococcal
Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR)	Rabies
Tuberculosis (TB) (mostly healthcare staff)	Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE)
Varicella (mostly healthcare staff)	Typhoid
Yellow Fever	

### **Where can I find more information?**

You can speak to a member of the medical team on the day of your vaccination clinic. You can also find out more about the vaccines and the diseases they protect against by visiting the Vaccinations page on NHS Choices website, available at <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/vaccination-schedule-age-checklist.aspx>