

# Health and Safety Office

## Vaccination Policy and Code of Practice

### INTRODUCTION

Immunity is the body's ability to protect itself from infectious disease. This is normally achieved by natural infection or disease or by vaccination (the artificial induction of immunity). Vaccines generally provide immunity similar to that provided by the natural infection but without the risk of contracting the disease or its complications.

The risks from working directly with biological agents or from indirect exposure to them should be fully discussed with each individual and their supervisor, and the necessary course of action must be taken before exposure to the biological agent(s) begins.

The University is obliged under health and safety law to prevent or reduce, so far as is reasonably practicable, exposure to biological agents. This requires the application of an infection control programme which includes vaccination.

The University requires that all staff exposed or potentially exposed to biological agents should be assessed as to the requirement for vaccination.

Effective vaccines exist for a number of biological agents. Although vaccination is considered a last resort and utilised to reinforce other control measures nevertheless, the vaccination programme must be appropriately managed.

University staff requiring vaccination may be in the following groups:

- Laboratory staff
- Maintenance staff
- Housekeeping staff and attendants
- Ground staff and gardeners
- Stewards
- Security staff
- Staff on fieldwork
- Staff travelling abroad
- First aiders and AED responders

In addition, students on some undergraduate programmes, including nursing, life science, and engineering, etc, may require vaccination.

## **GUIDELINES FOR VACCINATION**

Although vaccination confers additional protection against infection it must never be considered as the primary defence because:

- not all infections can be treated by vaccination
- immunisation may be partial where some individuals receive inadequate protection
- some persons may demonstrate unsuitable side-effects to the vaccine or there may be medical contra-indications.

Vaccination is not mandatory but staff should be informed of its benefits and possible disadvantages. Where staff decline vaccination a declaration must be signed by them. In some cases, where vaccination is highly desirable by the University but declined by the staff, and where other risk reduction controls are not reasonably possible, it may be necessary to relocate the individual away from the risk of exposure.

Where vaccination is required it will be offered free of charge and arranged and approved by management. This includes follow-up boosters and other relevant measures for as long as the risk of exposure is thought likely.

Where staff have received prior and adequate immunisation before the present risk assessment, the continued efficacy of immunisation will be assessed by a competent person such as a physician.

While pre-employment immunisation will not be required as a condition for employment, pre-employment, pre-exposure vaccination should be offered to staff where the risk assessment indicates such a measure. Post-exposure prophylaxis may be occasionally medically indicated.

### **When should vaccination be conducted?**

The risks from working directly with biological agents or from indirect exposure to them must be fully assessed by management, and should be fully discussed with each individual and their supervisor. The necessary course of action must be taken before exposure to the biological agent(s) begins. However, post-exposure vaccination may occasionally be indicated.

### **Who conducts the vaccination?**

Where vaccination is required it will be offered free of charge and arranged and approved by management; this includes follow-up boosters and other relevant measures for as long as the risk of exposure is thought likely.

### **What if I've already been vaccinated?**

If you have received vaccination before the present risk assessment the continued efficacy of immunisation will be assessed by a competent person. This normally requires documentary evidence of the type of vaccine and dates that it was administered to you.

### **Which employment activities in NUI Galway generally require vaccinations?**

The categories of University staff that may require more common types of vaccination include:

- Laboratory staff: vaccination against tetanus, hepatitis B
- Clinical laboratory staff: tetanus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, vaccinia and related pox viruses
- Research fieldworkers: tetanus, hepatitis A
- Plumbers: tetanus, hepatitis A
- Cleaners and housekeeping staff (depending on duties): tetanus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B
- Security: tetanus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B
- Telephone engineers: tetanus, hepatitis B
- Stewards: tetanus
- Food handlers: hepatitis A
- Ground staff and gardeners: tetanus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B
- First aiders and AED responders: tetanus, hepatitis B
- Student nurses: hepatitis A, hepatitis B
- Overseas travellers: tetanus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B (and others as necessary)

END

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