Rabies Products Shortages

The Ministry of Health has notified public health units (PHUs) that due to a higher demand over the past month, the provincial supplies of rabies vaccine and immunoglobulin for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) at the Ontario Government Pharmaceutical and Medical Supply Services may stock-out before they can be replenished by the manufacturers. At this time, it is anticipated that the current provincial supply will not be replenished before November 2019.

The Ministry has requested the following from PHUs as well as health care providers (HCPs):

- Ensure that thorough risk assessments are conducted for all reported exposures as well as requests for rabies biologicals submitted by HCPs
- Ensure that risk assessment outcomes and recommendations for PEP are clearly communicated to HCPs to support appropriate and judicious use of rabies biologicals
- Minimize wastage of rabies vaccine and rabies immunoglobulin by ensuring that cold chain requirements are followed.

The objective of PEP is to neutralize the rabies virus at the site of infection before the virus can enter the central nervous system; hence PEP should be started as soon as possible after the exposure and in accordance with the Ministry’s “Management of Potential Rabies Exposures Guideline, 2019” (February 2019).

PEP of previously unimmunized persons consists of administration of both Rabies Immune Globulin (Rablg) and rabies vaccine.

a) The Rablg recommended dose is 20 IU/kg based upon the body weight of the person and the entire dose should be administered on the first day of initiation of therapy, Day 0. If possible, the full dose of Rablg should be thoroughly infiltrated into the wound(s) and surrounding area(s).
b) The rabies vaccine should be administered IM at a different anatomical site distant from where the Rablg was administered on Day 0, and a separate syringe should be used. In general, the rabies vaccine is administered into the deltoid muscle in older children and adults but never in the gluteal region. The rabies vaccine for an immunocompetent person consists of four 1.0 mL doses of HDCV or PCECV, and a single dose should be administered on Days 0, 3, 7 and 14. Please see references for more information on infants, schedule & dosing for immunocompromised persons and previously immunized individuals.

Health care providers are to report animal bites and, where recommended, to order PEP for their patients, by contacting DRHD at 1-888-777-9613. Reports can also be submitted electronically by visiting Report an Animal Bite Online.

If you prefer to receive this information in an electronic format, please submit your request to healthresources@durham.ca.
If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-888-777-9613.