

This is an official **CDC HEALTH UPDATE**

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Smallpox Vaccination Policy Update

Several recent news stories have circulated suggesting that the federal government has reached a decision on the recommendations about use of smallpox vaccine that were made by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The purpose of this Health Alert message is to update you on the current status of the federal smallpox vaccine policy.

Pre-event Smallpox Vaccination

The CDC continues to solicit input regarding smallpox vaccination policy and the ACIP recommendations for pre-event vaccination in preparation for its recommendation to the Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson. No final policy decision has been reached.

The ACIP's recommendations made on June 21, 2002, include:

- Under current circumstances, with no confirmed smallpox, and the risk of an attack assessed as low, vaccination of the general population is not recommended, as the potential benefits of vaccination do not outweigh the risks of vaccine complications.
- Smallpox vaccination is recommended for persons pre-designated by the appropriate bioterrorism and public health authorities to conduct investigation and follow-up of initial smallpox cases that would necessitate direct patient contact.
- Smallpox vaccination is recommended for healthcare personnel at risk for exposure to the initial smallpox cases in facilities that are pre-designated to receive these patients.

The number of people to be vaccinated has not yet been determined. It will depend on the policy decision as well as input from state and local health officials responsible for bioterrorism planning.

Response to possible smallpox cases

In the event that a case or cases of smallpox are diagnosed, vaccination of contacts and contacts of contacts (ring vaccination) would be initiated as outlined in the CDC Draft Smallpox Response Plan.

In addition, if circumstances warrant, vaccination of communities or other populations (mass vaccination) would be added as a supplementary strategy.

CDC is assisting state and local health agencies to develop contingency plans for smallpox vaccination of persons at risk after a smallpox event.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES