



# NEWS RELEASE

## EUROPE REGIONAL MEDICAL COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

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### *Manufacturer recall to affect Army in Europe* **Merck pulls meningococcal vaccine**

**HEIDELBERG**, Germany – An inability to assure the sterility of nearly one million doses of a pediatric vaccine for meningococcus caused Merck and Co., Inc., one of the nation’s two manufacturers, to issue a recall of its products.

The recall and subsequent disruption to short-term supplies will have an impact on future supplies in U.S. Army Health facilities in Europe.

“We have inventoried the stocks of the PedvaxHIB<sup>®</sup> vaccine in our facilities, and found we had sufficient supplies of unaffected vaccine to carry us through the next two to three months,” said Col. Curtis Hansen, the Europe Regional Medical Command pharmacy consultant and chief of Pharmacy Services at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. “However, the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta announced earlier this week that the recall may cause disruptions to future supplies.”

Saying that the situation was still fluid, Hansen said that the CDC is suggesting modifications to immunization schedules, and ERMCM facility staffs will begin implementing those recommendations. Chief among these is a decision to not administer a booster for children at 12 months of age.

“To extend supplies, we will drop the booster dose given in ERMCM at 12 months of age except for certain exceptions,” said Lt. Col. Robert Smith, ERMCM Pediatrics consultant and commander of the Hohenfels Health Clinic. He said that medical staffs will be directed to keep “meticulous” records of those children who do not receive the booster at 12 months. “When supplies return to normal, these children will then receive the booster vaccine,” Smith said.

He added that rationing has been used in the past when other vaccine shortages have occurred.

To date, no children seen at Army health facilities in Europe have shown symptoms that would indicate an adverse reaction to the vaccine. Children who received their vaccine from one of the recalled lots are equally protected against illness as children who received vaccine from unrecalled lots. The recall related to questions about the sterility of the vaccine, not its effectiveness against disease, according to a CDC news release.

More information on the recall can be found on the CDC Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/recalls/hib-recall-faq-12-12-07.htm>. Parents who have concerns about the vaccine should ask their doctor at their next regularly scheduled office visit, Smith said.