

# MENINGOCOCCAL ACWY VACCINATION

## Parent Information Sheet

NSW Health is offering vaccination against four types of meningococcal disease (given as one injection) through the school vaccination program. Signed parental/guardian consent must be provided.

### Your next steps

- Carefully read this information sheet.
- If you would like your child to be vaccinated against meningococcal ACWY disease, complete the Consent Form where you see this symbol  and give the signed Consent Form to your child to return to school.
- If you do NOT wish your child to be vaccinated against meningococcal ACWY disease, do NOT complete or return the Consent Form.

### Q. What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a rare but serious infection that usually leads to meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and/or septicaemia (blood poisoning). Symptoms of meningococcal disease may be non-specific but may include sudden onset of fever, headache, neck stiffness, joint pain, a rash of red-purple spots or bruises, dislike of bright lights, nausea and vomiting. Up to 10 per cent of meningococcal infections are fatal even with appropriate antibiotic treatment, and survivors may be left with long-term complications.

### Q. Why is this vaccine being offered?

Cases of a particular type of meningococcal disease (meningococcal W) have been increasing nationally. This type of meningococcal disease is more severe with a higher case fatality rate than other types of meningococcal disease recently circulating in Australia. The only vaccine available against meningococcal W disease also provides protection against three other meningococcal types – A, C and Y. While meningococcal A is rare in Australia, meningococcal Y is also increasing. Most children will have been vaccinated against meningococcal C at 12 months of age (changed to meningococcal ACWY from 1 July 2018), and this ACWY vaccine will be a useful booster.

### Q. How is meningococcal disease spread?

Meningococcal bacteria are passed between people in the saliva from the back of the nose and throat. This generally requires close and prolonged contact with a person carrying the bacteria who is usually completely well. An example of 'close and prolonged contact' is living in the same household or intimate (deep) kissing. Meningococcal bacteria are not easily spread from person to person and the bacteria do not survive well outside the human body.

### Q. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work by triggering the immune system to fight certain infections. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with these infections, their immune system is able to respond more effectively, preventing the disease developing or greatly reducing its severity.

### Q. How effective is the meningococcal ACWY vaccine?

A single dose of meningococcal ACWY conjugate vaccine is very effective in providing protection against these four types of meningococcal disease. The vaccine does not protect against meningococcal disease caused by type B.

### Q. Who should be vaccinated in this program?

All students in Year 10 in secondary schools, and those aged 15-19 years attending Intensive English Centres, should be vaccinated to be protected against meningococcal serogroups A, C, W and Y.

### Q. Who should not be vaccinated?

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine should not be given to people who have had anaphylaxis:

- following a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine
- following any of the vaccine components

People with a known hypersensitivity to diphtheria toxoid should also not be vaccinated with meningococcal ACWY vaccine.

### Q. What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that may result in unconsciousness and death if not treated quickly.

It occurs very rarely after any vaccination. The school immunisation nurses are fully trained in the treatment of anaphylaxis.



**Q.** Hasn't my child already received the meningococcal ACWY vaccine?

The Meningococcal ACWY vaccine has been included on the National Immunisation Program for children aged 12 months of age since July 2018. Your child may have previously received a meningococcal C vaccine which only protects against meningococcal C disease.

A small number of students with certain medical conditions (such as no spleen or immune deficiency) may have previously been given this vaccine. If so, please discuss with your GP or specialist if your child is due for a booster.

**Q.** My child has already received a meningococcal C vaccine - is it safe to receive meningococcal ACWY vaccine?

Most children will have received meningococcal C vaccine as infants. In some countries an adolescent booster is recommended, and this ACWY vaccine will provide a booster dose against meningococcal C disease as well as protect against types A, W and Y. Some children will have received a dose of meningococcal C vaccine in 2015-2018 as part of the catch-up for No Jab, No Pay. Having a dose of meningococcal ACWY vaccine now is safe. It is preferable to leave at least 4 weeks between doses for optimal protection against all types.

**Q.** What are the other indications for this vaccine?

This vaccine is also recommended for people planning travel involving a greater risk of exposure to meningococcal disease, including the Hajj. The vaccine is also recommended for certain occupations, such as microbiology laboratory staff, and for people with certain medical conditions, such as not having a spleen.

**Q.** What additives does the meningococcal ACWY vaccine contain?

The vaccine may contain trometamol, sucrose and sodium chloride. Additives are included in very small amounts to either assist the vaccine to work or to act as a preservative.

**Q.** How safe are vaccines?

Vaccines used in Australia are safe and must pass strict safety testing before being approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). In addition, the TGA monitors the safety of vaccines once they are in use.

**Q.** What are the side effects of meningococcal ACWY vaccination?

Side effects are commonly mild and usually involve fever or redness, pain and swelling at the injection site. Serious side effects are extremely rare.

**Q.** Should the vaccine be given to a female student who is or thinks she may be pregnant?

No. Any female student who is, or thinks she may be, pregnant should not be vaccinated.

On the day of the clinic the vaccination nurse will ask female students if they are or could be pregnant. If a student answers yes to this question, she will not be vaccinated. The student will be urged to immediately discuss the issue with her parent/ guardian and to seek medical help. She will also be provided with contact details for a health referral service that will provide advice, support and guidance.

**Q.** What if my child has asthma and takes cortisone or prednisone by a "puffer"?

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine can be safely administered to someone who has asthma regardless of which medications they are taking.

**Q.** Who can consent to vaccination and can consent be withdrawn?

Only parents/guardians can consent to vaccination for students less than 18 years of age. Students aged 18 years and over may consent to their own vaccination and should complete and sign the Consent Form where 'Parent/Guardian' is indicated. Consent can be withdrawn at any time by providing the school with written notification of the withdrawal of consent or telephoning the school to withdraw consent.

**Q.** What do I do if my child missed out on the vaccine because of illness or absence on the day of the nurses' visit?

Every effort will be made to vaccinate your child during the school year. Where this is not possible, you will be advised of arrangements for catch-up vaccination.

**Q.** Will I receive a record of the vaccination?

Your child will be given a record of vaccination. You should not assume that your child has been vaccinated if you do not receive this record of vaccination. Please keep this record for future reference and advise your GP that this vaccination has been given the next time you visit.

**Q.** What will happen to my child's information?

The information you provide on the Consent Form is subject to strict confidentiality and privacy protections contained in NSW and Commonwealth legislation and will be disclosed to NSW (see the enclosed Privacy Statement). The information will be entered into NSW and Commonwealth registers to provide an electronic record of your child's vaccinations and associated purposes.

**Q.** Where can I find more information about immunisation?

More information is available:

- by contacting your local public health unit on 1300 066 055 or visiting the NSW Health website at [www.health.nsw.gov.au/meningococcalW](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/meningococcalW)
- on the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance website at [www.ncirs.edu.au](http://www.ncirs.edu.au)
- in the Australian Immunisation Handbook at [www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)
- on the Therapeutic Goods Administration's website at [www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au)