

Meningococcal ACWY vaccination

Parent Information Sheet

NSW Health offers the vaccines recommended for adolescents by the National Health and Medical Research Council in a 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 please provide your consent online or request a paper based consent form from your school.
- If you do not wish your child to be vaccinated against meningococcal ACWY, do not provide consent.

Q. How do I provide consent for school vaccination?

To provide online consent you will need:

- your Service NSW log-in details and Medicare card details for you and your child.
- If you or your child do not have a Medicare card, consent can still be provided by requesting a paper-based consent form (available on request from schools).

Parents can withdraw consent at any time before vaccination takes place.

Where consent has been given online, please log-in to the secure NSW Health online consent portal and follow the prompts to withdraw consent.

Where consent has been given on the physical consent form, please write to or call the school to advise the student's name, school grade and those vaccines the withdrawn consent applies to.

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. 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 additives

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, headache, dizziness or pain, swelling and redness at the injection site. Injection site reactions generally resolve within 2-3 days. Serious side effects are extremely rare.

More information about side effects is available in the Consumer Medical Information (CMI) for the vaccine available from www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination.

Parents concerned about side effects after vaccination should contact their GP who should also make a report to the local public health unit.

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

If vaccination has been missed at school, catch-up should occur as soon as possible. Parents should contact their local GP or pharmacist to arrange vaccination.

Q. How can I access a record of the vaccinations?

Information about your child's vaccinations will be uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child's existing immunisation history.

Parents can request a copy of their child's AIR Immunisation History Statement at any time up to their child being 14 years of age, and students aged 14 years and over can request their own immunisation history statement, as follows:

- using the Medicare online account through myGov my.gov.au/
- using the Medicare Express Plus App www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/expressplus-mobile-apps
- calling the AIR General Enquiries Line on **1800 653 809**.

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 (see the enclosed Privacy Statement). The information will be entered into a NSW Health immunisation register and then uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) so it can be linked to your child's existing immunisation history and viewed on MyGov.

Q. Where can I find more information about school vaccination?

More information is available:

- by visiting the NSW Health website at www.health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination
- by contacting your local public health unit on **1300 066 055**