



Meningococcal ACWY Vaccination Program– FAQs

(As of 30 January 2017)

What is the Meningococcal ACWY program?

The Meningococcal ACWY Vaccination Program is in response to a recent increase of meningococcal infection caused by a particular type of the bacteria, 'serogroup W'.

This program will be offered to children aged 15-19 years because this age group can transmit the bacteria to people who are at increased risk of infection, including young children.

Why is this targeted vaccination program necessary?

Although numbers are low, meningococcal W cases have been increasing annually since 2013 with one case notified in that year and 14 cases in 2016. Prior to 2013, serogroup W was uncommon with only six cases diagnosed in the 13 year period from 2000 to 2012. It is anticipated that this program will reduce the spread of this potentially life threatening infection within the community.

Why is the program targeting 15-19 year olds?

Some of the highest rates of meningococcal carriage and illness occur among 15-19 year olds and this age group can transmit the bacteria to people who are at increased risk of infection, including young children. The rationale for vaccinating 15-19 years olds is to both decrease illness from meningococcal W in this age group and to prevent carriage. Reducing carriage in this age group will reduce transmission of the bacteria to others and help prevent infections within the larger community.

How much will this program cost?

The estimated cost for the first year of a WA Meningococcal ACWY vaccination program is \$6M of which, \$4.8M is for vaccine purchase.

Why is the State paying for this?

The Commonwealth Government is currently considering a national Meningococcal ACWY vaccination program for 15-19 year olds, however no decision has yet been made. The WA State Government has made the proactive decision to start a vaccination program to reduce spread within the WA community.

Which vaccine will be used?

The meningococcal ACWY vaccine will be used. This vaccine protects against four groups of meningococcal bacteria: A, C, W and Y. The conjugate meningococcal ACWY vaccine Nimenrix®, supplied in Australia by Pfizer, will be used in this program.

How effective is the meningococcal ACWY vaccine?

The vaccine is safe and effective. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of the meningococcal ACWY vaccines is between 80 to 85 per cent in adolescents. Meningococcal ACWY vaccination programs have been implemented in adolescents aged 13-15 years in the UK since 2015, and adolescents aged 11-12 years in the US since 2005.

Can the vaccine cause meningococcal disease?

No. Only the *Neisseria meningitidis* bacterium can cause meningococcal disease. The vaccine does not contain any live bacteria.

How will the program work?

In 2017, the program would entail school-based immunisations in Years 10, 11, and 12 with additional vaccination clinics conducted at community health clinics to capture 18-19 year olds and other age-eligible persons not attending high school. In 2018 and 2019 the program would target incoming Year 10 students only.

Parents can expect to receive meningococcal W vaccination consent materials through their child's school in Terms 2 and 3. They are urged to complete the form and return to their child's school promptly so their child can receive the vaccine.

What is the target population size?

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there are 162,515 persons aged 15-19 years in WA in 2017; approximately 30,000 Year 10 students each year in 2018 and 2019. More than 150,000 WA students and young adults are expected to be vaccinated over the three-year program.

What is the estimated vaccine coverage?

Expected coverage is 60-70% overall in 2017, with comparatively higher rates in persons still attending school. This coverage estimate is roughly based on the experience with a similar meningococcal vaccination program in the UK.

How long will the program run?

The WA program would initially be planned to operate for three years. This time-limited program could be terminated earlier if it was replaced by a national program or at the end of the three-year period, if a reduction in meningococcal disease in WA were to indicate it was no longer necessary.

When will the vaccination program start?

The school-based vaccination program could be initiated in School Term 2 with the majority of the school based vaccinations occurring in Term 3.

Who is most at risk from meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease can affect any age group. Of the 21 meningococcal W cases diagnosed in WA between 2013 and 2016, a third (33%) of cases were children aged four years and under, and 24 per cent were adolescents aged 15-19 years, with the remaining 43 per cent in persons 20 years of age and older. Offering the vaccine to the 15-19 years olds is anticipated to significantly reduce carriage of the bacteria in this cohort, thereby decreasing spread to other age groups.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?

The symptoms of meningococcal disease can include: fever, headache, neck stiffness, muscle or joint pains, drowsiness, confusion, nausea and vomiting and a rash of red-purple spots or bruises.

Common symptoms of meningococcal disease in babies include: fever, rapid breathing, rash, vomiting, irritability, drowsiness, poor feeding and pale skin.

If you or someone you know develops symptoms or signs consistent with meningococcal disease consult your family doctor or the Emergency Department of the closest hospital immediately.

Where can I get more information about meningococcal disease?

Visit: www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/J_M/Meningococcal-disease

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