

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

Meningococcal B Program

From 1 October 2018 the State Government Meningococcal B Immunisation Program will provide free meningococcal B vaccines to eligible children and young people who are residents of South Australia and who have a Medicare card.

Why is the vaccine only being offered to these age groups?

Over the last 18 years, meningococcal B disease in South Australia has not declined, unlike in other states. In South Australia, young children up to four years of age (and especially those aged less than 2 years of age) have the highest incidence of invasive meningococcal B disease. The second highest at risk group are those aged between 15 and 20 years of age. Meningococcal B vaccine is recommended for these age groups as they are at increased risk of meningococcal B disease.

What about children older than 4 years of age and under 15 years of age?

Children in this age group have a lower incidence of invasive meningococcal B disease. As these children get older, they will be offered the vaccine in Year 10 as part of the School Immunisation Program.

When and where can children under 4 years of age be immunised?

Childhood Program

From 1 October 2018 children aged 6 weeks of age to 12 months of age will be able to access free meningococcal B vaccine under an ongoing immunisation program.

For children over 12 months to less than 4 years of age, the free vaccine will be available as part of a time limited catch up program that ends on 31 December 2019.

You can access the free vaccine through GPs, local government immunisation clinics, Aboriginal Health Services, Child and Family Health Services (CaFHS), Country Health SA Local Health Network (CHSALHN) and the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN).

If your child commences their meningococcal B immunisation course before the end of the catch up program then they will be eligible to receive all remaining required doses for free.

Where and when can young people be immunised?

School Program

The free vaccine will be introduced as part of the School Immunisation Program for Year 10 students from 2019.

A time limited catch up program for Year 11 students that ends on 31 December 2019 will also be offered in the 2019 School Immunisation Program

Take home information on the School Immunisation Program will be provided to students at the beginning of the 2019 school year as part of the standard school program.



Catch up for 17 to less than 21 year olds

Individuals aged 17 to less than 21 years of age can access the vaccine through their immunisation provider as part of a time limited catch up program that ends on 31 December 2019.

What if my child was involved in the *Meningococcal B Vaccine Herd Immunity Study- B Part of it?*

Individuals who were/are in school years 10-12 in 2017 and 2018 may have **already had** the meningococcal B vaccination through the Meningococcal B Vaccine Herd Immunity Study.

It is important you are aware of your child's immunisation history. Children who received Meningococcal B vaccine in the Study will have received a printed record at the time. From the beginning of 2019 the record of the vaccination should also be available on the Australian Immunisation Register.

What vaccine will be used?

- > Bexsero® vaccine will be used in the childhood program.
- > Bexsero® or Trumenba® will be used for the School Immunisation Program and catch up programs for individuals 17 to less than 21 years of age.

How many doses will my child need?

Your child may receive between 2 and 4 doses of the vaccine depending on their age when they commence/d the course.

Can the meningococcal B vaccine be given with other vaccines?

Meningococcal B vaccine can be given with other routine childhood and adolescent vaccines.

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. All vaccines used in Australia have been extensively tested for safety. Before any vaccine can be used in Australia it must be licensed by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). The TGA uses scientific evidence on each vaccine to assess safety and effectiveness.

Are there any side effects?

As with all immunisations, it will be important that parents and carers are familiar with the management of commonly expected side effects, some of which include fever (more common in children aged less than two years of age) and pain, redness and swelling at the injection site.

Other common reactions include feeling unsettled or irritable, decreased appetite, headache, drowsiness, rash and nausea.

It is recommended that children less than 2 years of age receive paracetamol approximately 30 minutes before administration of Bexsero, and that they receive two further doses at 6 hourly intervals after the vaccine is given.

What if I am concerned about any side effects?

If you are concerned, seek further advice from your doctor, immunisation provider or SA Health Immunisation Section on 1300 232 272 Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm.

After these hours contact *healthdirect Australia* on 1800 022 222.

For more information

**Immunisation Section
Communicable Disease Control Branch
PO Box 6 Rundle Mall SA 5000
Telephone: 1300 232 272**

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation

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