What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a bacterial infection of the blood and/or the membranes that line the spinal cord and brain. It is an uncommon but sometimes life-threatening illness. At any one time, approximately 10 per cent of healthy people carry meningococcal bacteria harmlessly in their nose or throat and do not become ill. Rarely, the bacteria causes serious invasive infections, including septicaemia (infection of the blood), meningitis (infection of the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord) and in 10 per cent of cases, long term disability (e.g. deafness).

How do you get meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal bacteria are spread by respiratory secretions (coughing or sneezing). The bacteria do not survive more than a few seconds in the environment. The disease is most likely to be spread only to very close contacts, such as people who live in the same household, sexual contacts and children attending the same day care for more than four continuous hours.

Why is WA Health implementing a vaccination program for 15-19 year olds?

The WA meningococcal W immunisation program has been launched in response to a recent increase in meningococcal infection caused by a particular type of the bacteria, 'serogroup W'. Meningococcal disease can affect any age group. However, some of the highest rates of meningococcal carriage and illness occur among 15-19 year olds and this age group can transmit bacteria to people who are at an increased risk of infection, including young children.

How will the program work?

In 2017, the program will entail school-based immunisations in Years 10, 11, and 12 with additional clinics conducted at community health clinics to capture age-eligible persons not receiving the vaccine at school.

Which vaccine will be used and how effective is it?

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine will be used. This vaccine protects against four serogroups of meningococcal bacteria: A, C, W, and Y. The conjugate vaccine Nimenrix® supplied in Australia by Pfizer will be used for this targeted program. The vaccine is routine offered as a single dose. Further doses are recommended for those at increased risk of this disease and those travelling where this disease is common.

Of the 21 meningococcal W cases diagnosed in WA between 2013 and 2016, 24 per cent were adolescents aged 15-19 years old. It is anticipated that immunising this age group will reduce transmission of the bacteria to others and help prevent infections within the larger community.

Please complete the attached consent form and return to your child’s school.
Who should not get this vaccine?

Tell the person giving the vaccine if:

- you have any severe, life-threatening allergies. If you have had a life-threatening allergic reaction after a previous dose of a meningococcal ACWY vaccine, or if you have a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine, you should not get this vaccine. Your provider can tell you about the vaccine’s ingredients.

- you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Meningococcal vaccines are not routinely recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women but can be given where clinically indicated. Please discuss further with your GP if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

What are the vaccine side effects?

With any medicine, including vaccines, there is a chance of common adverse reactions. These are usually mild and go away by themselves. Serious reactions are also possible, but are rare. There is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death.

Common adverse events include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, fever, irritability, drowsiness, decreased appetite, headaches, rash, and nausea. However, serious general adverse events are rare.


What if there is a serious reaction – what should I look for?

Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or unusual behaviour. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness – usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination. For any severe reaction, call an ambulance or go to your closest emergency department.

What should I do?

Paracetamol can help relieve mild fever or pain and a cool damp cloth can also reduce pain at the injection site. Please seek medical advice or go to the local emergency department if you have a reaction you think is serious or unexpected.

Or call healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222. Reactions should be reported to the Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS). Your immunisation provider should file this report, or you can do it yourself through the WAVSS website [www.wavss.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.wavss.health.wa.gov.au) or 9321 1312 8.30am-4.30pm weekdays.

Further information

If you have any queries about this program, contact healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222 or your local provider on the contact details provided below.

Regional Public Health Units

Goldfields 9080 8200
Great Southern 9842 7526
Kimberley 9194 1630
Midwest 9956 1980
Pilbara 9174 1660
South West 9781 2355
Wheatbelt 9622 4320

Residents in local councils listed below, contact:

City of Wanneroo 9405 5000
City of Bayswater 9272 0622
City of Joondalup 9400 4938

For other metropolitan Perth residents, contact:

Central Immunisation Clinic 9321 1312

Please keep this in a safe place for future reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccine</th>
<th>Date given</th>
<th>Batch number</th>
<th>Site: right arm</th>
<th>Site: left arm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meningococcal ACWY Nimenrix®</td>
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Vaccinator’s name:

Vaccinator’s signature:

Vaccine details will be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register.