

August 2023

Tēnā koe,

Please encourage your students to get their Meningococcal vaccinations

The National Immunisation Programme wrote to you earlier in the year to inform you that the Meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine was added to the immunisation schedule, alongside the already funded Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccine.

The meningococcal vaccines are free for young people aged 13-25 years (inclusive) who are entering into, or in their first year of residing in certain close-living situations, specifically; boarding school hostels, tertiary education halls of residence, military barracks, prison, or youth justice facilities.

There is also a free 'catch up' programme (for MenB only) available for the same eligible age group who are in any year of the above close-living situations. The catch-up period runs until 28 February 2024. After this, only those entering into, or in their first year living in these facilities will be eligible to receive the vaccine for free.

How you can support:

- Actively encourage young people to have their free MenB vaccination as soon as possible (i.e., before moving into your facility) to reduce their risk of the harm caused by meningococcal disease.
- Use this opportunity to encourage whānau to catch-up on any immunisations they have missed, including MenACWY, which is funded for this same age group in their first year of close-living situations. Measles and human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccines can also be given at the same time as MenB.
- Facilitate vaccination services at your facility as appropriate. Your local Health District Immunisation Lead can help with this.
- Use and share the range of resources and key messages attached with this letter.

Thank you again for your continued commitment to help protect your community from vaccine preventable diseases. For any questions or further information please reach out to our team, immunisation@health.govt.nz.

Ngā mihi,



Rob Humphrys

Group Manager, Operations

National Immunisation Programme, Prevention

National Public Health Service, Te Whatu Ora

Resources

Te Whatu Ora provides a range of resources and information sources on immunisation, and specifically for immunisation to protect against Meningococcal.

1. Te Whatu Ora has a new immunisation website which includes information about all vaccines on the Aotearoa National Immunisation Schedule: immunise.health.nz
2. [Dropbox](#) and [Health Ed](#) have resources such as flyers, social media tiles and posters available which can be downloaded to print or used electronically.
3. Printed MenB promotional resources can be ordered via the Bluestar portal (https://portal.bluestar.co.nz/login/moh_vaccine). You can register for access via the portal by selecting **Need to Register?** below the login details. Once the online registration form is completed you will receive email confirmation of your registration with an activation button to complete the registration process.

We encourage sharing of vaccine information to your community by using the available resources through some examples below:

1. Sharing key messages and social media tiles through your online platforms such as newsletters, emails and social media channels.
2. Sharing information with parents/whānau in newsletters and events such as parent/whānau days. Encourage booking of vaccinations; if vaccinations are not being offered at the facility, please visit www.healthpoint.co.nz/immunisation/ to locate a vaccination service.
3. Encourage vaccinations to be completed before entering your facility by adding information into your enrolment packages and whānau preparation checklists including overseas student networks. Please ensure there is enough time for the vaccine course to be completed.
4. Kōrero with rangatahi (young people) and whānau to encourage immunisation:
 - **Who?** Free MenB and MenACWY vaccines for those aged 13-25 years who are in close-living situations:
 - those entering into or in their first year of boarding schools or halls
 - those beyond their first year of boarding schools or halls, only until **28 Feb 2024 (MenB only)**
 - **Why?** Protect yourself now. Reduce the risk of the harm caused by meningococcal disease.
 - **What?** Get your free MenB vaccine. You can also catch-up on any other vaccines you're eligible for (e.g., Meningococcal ACWY, Measles, HPV).
 - **Where?** GPs, hauora Māori partners and Pacific providers, youth and university health services (e.g., student health) and some community pharmacies. To locate vaccine services in your area please visit www.healthpoint.co.nz/immunisation/.

More Information

1. Meningococcal disease

Meningococcal disease is an infection caused by meningococcal bacteria, including A, B, C, W, and Y. In Aotearoa New Zealand, most meningococcal disease is caused by the group B bacteria.

It can lead to two very serious illnesses:

- Meningitis: An infection of the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord
- Septicaemia: Blood poisoning

The disease is spread in similar ways to the common cold – by coughing and sneezing, or by contact with saliva (spit). People who survive meningococcal disease often have serious long-term effects, including amputation of limbs, hearing loss, seizures, brain injury, and permanent skin scarring. It can lead to serious illness or death among people who are otherwise healthy.

It can affect anyone but most commonly young children and those living in close-living accommodation such as university halls of residence, hostels, and boarding facilities.

For more information visit: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/meningococcal-disease-including-meningitis>

2. Vaccines

The vaccine for meningococcal B is called Bexsero and requires 2 doses given 8 weeks apart. The vaccine for the meningococcal ACWY is called MenQuadfi and only requires 1 dose. Both vaccines are usually given into the upper arm and can be given at the same time as other vaccines e.g., Influenza (Flu) or COVID-19 vaccines.

Vaccines are available through GPs, Hauora Māori and Pacific providers, youth and university health services, and in participating pharmacies. Locate a vaccine service by visiting www.healthpoint.co.nz/immunisation/.

3. Catch-up Programme / Eligibility detail

The meningococcal vaccines are funded for young people aged 13-25 years (inclusive) who are entering into, or in their first year of residing in certain close-living situations, specifically; boarding school hostels, tertiary education halls of residence, military barracks, prison, or youth justice facilities.

There is also a funded 'catch up' programme available for the same eligible age group who are in any year of the above close-living situations (for MenB only). The catch-up period runs until 28 February 2024, after this, only those entering into, or in their first year living in these facilities will be eligible to receive the vaccine for free.