

Immunisation Program Update

Issue No. 13
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From the manager

This year there was record demand for influenza vaccine across Australia. The unprecedented demand required the skills of all involved in vaccine supply, distribution and administration to manage stock carefully. Your support helped to ensure that requests for funded vaccine in Queensland could continue to be supplied.

An additional challenge this year, due to national vaccine purchasing policy, was the requirement for immunisation providers to manage up to six different influenza vaccines. Each of the six vaccines has been recommended for a specific age group, making influenza immunisation administration more complex in 2018 than in previous years. Feedback received has indicated that the resources developed to assist providers were well received. You can read more about the 2018 influenza vaccination program on page 2.

Also in this edition, we look at the new digital version of the *Australian Immunisation Handbook* and there's advice on where to go for information about meningococcal vaccination as well as other current immunisation program issues.

The Queensland Health Immunisation Program – in collaboration with the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Services Cunningham Centre – is developing online education and training courses for immunisation providers with the first two modules soon to be launched. Read about this upcoming exciting suite of free and self-paced online immunisation courses on page 5.

I trust this edition of the Immunisation Program Update is informative. Please send your feedback to immunisation@health.qld.gov.au

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The new digital *Australian Immunisation Handbook*

The new digital *Australian Immunisation Handbook* can be accessed online through the Australian Government, Department of Health website at <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/> Bookmark the web address to your 'Favourites' folder for quick and easy access.

What's new?

- New simplified language and in a format easier to read onscreen but with the same evidence-based content
- Whilst the language has changed the familiar structure has been retained
- More ways to find information with a helpful search function
- New resources for busy health professionals (*download and print reference tables and resources such as the infographic on 'Preparing an anaphylaxis response kit'*)
- There's now a feedback link on the bottom of every page if there's an error on a page or if something should be changed.

The Handbook provides authoritative clinical information for Australian immunisation providers on the safest and most effective use of vaccines, information about new vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases in Australia.

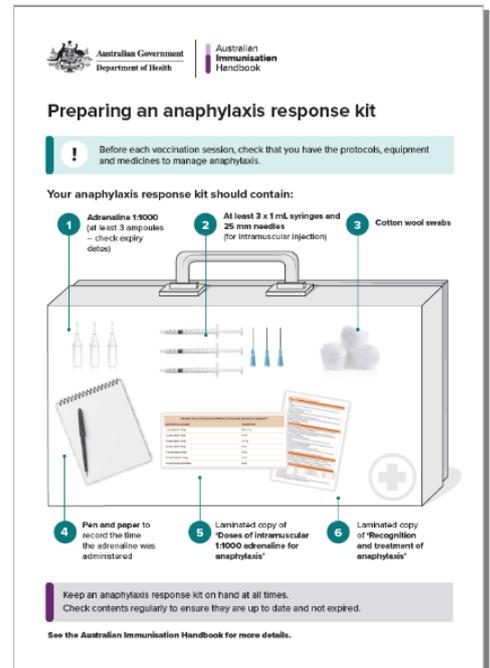
Australian Immunisation Handbook recommendations are developed by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) and approved by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

With the new digital Handbook, a printed hardcopy version will no longer be available. NB: If you have a hard copy version of the Australian Immunisation Handbook this will be out of date.

Flu immunisation program 2018

The state-wide distribution of influenza vaccines for the 2018 flu season in Queensland commenced on Monday 9 April. From April through to the end of September, more than 1,180,000 doses of government funded influenza vaccines were supplied to over 1,800 immunisation providers in Queensland. More than 670,000 doses of influenza vaccine were distributed in April alone, only 170,000 doses less than the total number of influenza vaccine doses distributed for the whole of 2017.

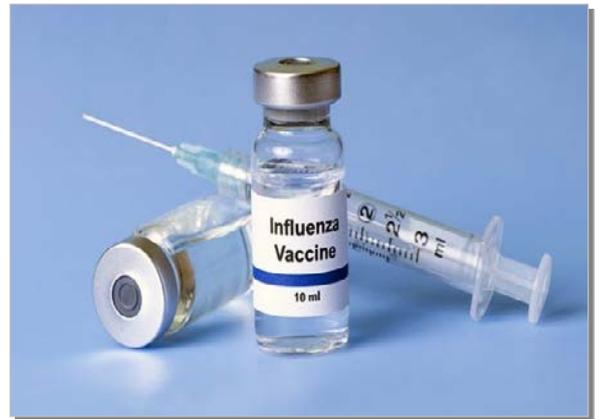
This year two new vaccines were introduced for people over the age of 65 years: Fluzone® High-Dose, containing four times the antigen dose of the standard dose; and Fludax®, which contains an adjuvant to boost a person's immune system response to the vaccine. In addition, for the first time in 2018, the Queensland Government funded influenza vaccine for all children aged six months to less than five years. FluQuadri Junior™ and Fluarix Tetra™ were supplied for this program.



The nationwide demand for influenza vaccine in 2018 not only affected the government funded program but also vaccine availability in the private market. Consequently, many providers were under pressure to meet community needs during peak demand. Careful management of government funded stock in Queensland ensured uninterrupted supply of influenza vaccines for the priority populations targeted under the National Immunisation Program and the Queensland Government funded childhood influenza immunisation program.

The demand this year for influenza vaccine indicates communication strategies in the lead up to the flu season were effective. Many more people this year than in previous years heeded the advice that vaccination is the best means of protection against influenza.

Laboratory confirmed notifications of influenza this year are much lower than in recent years. These data indicate that there was significantly less, severe flu-related illness in the Queensland population this year to date than in 2017.



NB: INFLUENZA VACCINE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Providers should remind pregnant women to have the influenza vaccine even though we are nearing the end of the flu season for 2018. FluQuadri® can still be used until **8 March 2019**.

For women who receive an influenza vaccine late in the influenza season, revaccinate if the subsequent season's vaccine becomes available before the end of the pregnancy. Women who are in their first trimester in the first quarter of the year may wish to wait until that year's influenza vaccine becomes available, rather than receiving last year's vaccine.

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine on the NIP schedule for adolescents

From 1 April 2019, meningococcal ACWY vaccine will be funded through the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for adolescents aged 15 to 19 years. Adolescents in Year 10 will continue to be offered the vaccine through the School Immunisation Program. Eligible adolescents who miss the vaccine at school or who are no longer at school can receive government funded vaccine through GP practices and other community immunisation providers.

Note: Up until April 2019, Queensland Health will continue to fund meningococcal ACWY vaccine for adolescents aged 15 to 19 years. Nimenrix® will replace Menactra® from February 2019 for this program.

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For more information about meningococcal vaccines, immunisation providers should go to the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) website.

NCIRS meningococcal vaccination resources include a **Fact sheet**

www.ncirs.edu.au/assets/provider_resources/fact-sheets/meningococcal-vaccines-fact-sheet.pdf and

Frequently asked questions

http://ncirs.edu.au/assets/provider_resources/fact-sheets/meningococcal-vaccines-FAQ.pdf

FactSheet **ncirs**
www.ncirs.edu.au

Meningococcal vaccines

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINES FOR AUSTRALIANS:
INFORMATION FOR IMMUNISATION PROVIDERS

The fact sheet provides information for immunisation providers on meningococcal disease and the use of meningococcal vaccines in Australia. It can be used in conjunction with the NCIRS fact sheet [Meningococcal vaccine frequently asked questions](#) to facilitate discussions with parents or other individuals considering meningococcal vaccine.

Disease and epidemiology

- Meningococcal disease is a rare but serious infection caused by the bacterium *Neisseria meningitidis* (N. meningitidis). There are 13 serogroups. Meningococcal disease is most commonly caused by serogroups A, B, C, W and Y.
- Septicemia and meningitis are the most common clinical manifestations of invasive meningococcal disease (IMD). The highest incidence of meningococcal disease is in children aged <2 years and adolescents aged 15–19 years. Carriage rates of the bacteria are highest in other adolescents and young adults.
- The incidence of meningococcal disease fluctuates naturally over time. Meningococcal B disease has been dominant until recently, but has been naturally declining in most states and territories, even in the absence of widespread vaccination against the meningococcus. The incidence of meningococcal B disease has increased since 2013. In 2017, serogroups B and W caused similar numbers of meningococcal disease cases in Australia (37.5% and 36.1%, respectively, of cases with an identified serogroup).
- Meningococcal B disease remains the most common cause of IMD in children, adolescents and young adults. Meningococcal B and W disease occur over a more diverse age range and may present with less typical clinical manifestations than disease due to other serogroups.

Vaccines

- Three types of meningococcal vaccines are available in Australia:
 - recombinant meningococcal B (MenB) vaccines: Bexsero[®], Trumenor[®]
 - quadrivalent (A, C, W, Y) meningococcal (MenACWY) conjugate vaccines: Menactra[®], Menveo[®], Menomix[®]
 - meningococcal C (MenC) conjugate vaccine: Menitorix[®] (combination formulation with the Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)-MenC vaccine, NewVax-C[®] (inactivated meningococcal C vaccine).

Who should be vaccinated

- People in age groups with increased incidence of IMD or high carriage rates of N. meningitidis:
 - Infants and young children aged <2 years: All infants and children aged <2 years are recommended to receive MenACWY vaccine. A younger single dose of MenACWY vaccine at 12 months of age is recommended and funded under the National Immunisation Program (NIP). MenACWY vaccine is available for infants <12 months of age through private prescription from 6 weeks of age, and requires more doses. MenB vaccine (Bexsero[®]) only for this age group is also recommended but not funded under the NIP for children aged <2 years.
 - Adolescents and some young adults: All adolescents aged 15–19 years are recommended to receive MenB and MenACWY vaccines. Some young adults aged 20–29 years who live in close quarters (such as in military recruits and students living in residential accommodation) or who are sport athletes, are also recommended to receive vaccination. In some Australian states, vaccines are funded for certain age groups in response to locally predominant meningococcal B or W disease (see Table 1).

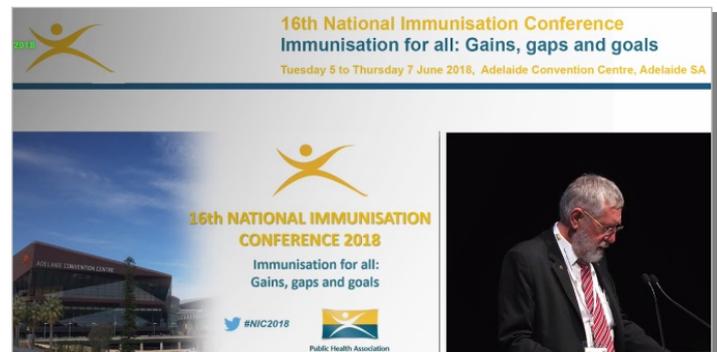
Meningococcal vaccines for Australians | NCIRS Fact sheet, August 2018 1

16th National Immunisation Conference 2018

The biennial National Immunisation Conference convened by the Public Health Association of Australia was held this year in Adelaide. Over the course of three days, 5–7 June, several hundred delegates, experts in the field of immunisation together with practitioners and policy makers converged on the Adelaide Convention Centre to discuss contemporary issues and challenges in immunisation. The theme of the conference was *Immunisation for all: Gains, gaps and goals*.

Highlights of the conference included the following presentations:

- Professor Gagandeep Kang, *Closing the gap and getting vaccines to children who need them most*
- Professor Margaret Stanley who delivered the Feery Oration, *10 years of HPV vaccines: Successes and setbacks. Where next?*
- Dr Georgie Paxton, *Catching up with catch-up: Refugee background and asylum seeker populations*
- Professor Nicholas Zwar, *Who is missing out on getting immunised – Migrants and travellers*
- Associate Professor Chris Blyth, *Protecting the most vulnerable – Children and adults with comorbidities*
- Ms Katrina Clark, *Access to immunisations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*
- Dr Peter Richmond, *Meningococcal disease ascendant – How should Australia respond?*
- Dr Robert Menzies, *Vaccinating the forgotten people – adults aged 65 years*
- Dr Flor Munoz-Rivas, *Vaccination in pregnancy. RSV vaccines – Are we there yet?*
- Ms Dianne Krensk, *SMS pre-call program to increase immunisation coverage and timeliness in Central Queensland*



Video recordings of these and other presentations can be found on the conference website at <https://armchairmedical.vhx.tv/immunisation-2018>

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Immunisation online courses

After many months of work by the project team, the Immunisation Program in collaboration with the Cunningham Centre will shortly launch the first two courses of a suite of four comprehensive online training courses for Queensland immunisation providers. *Course 1: Vaccine administration* and *Course 2: Vaccine management* will go live by mid-November 2018.



Immunisation eLearning

✓ Self-paced ✓ Easy access ✓ Free

Course 1: Vaccine administration

This online course will provide a comprehensive overview of the complex and ever-changing topic of immunisation for those who receipt, administer or manage vaccines in Queensland. It is a six-hour long foundation course for subsequent online immunisation courses. Participants can learn about the components of vaccines; how vaccines are produced; how vaccines work to stimulate the immune system; how to prepare and administer vaccines; and how to care for patients post vaccination. The course explains the NIP schedule and the vaccination requirements for special groups. It will also equip participants with knowledge how to respond to people who may be vaccine hesitant.

Course 2: Vaccine management

This two and a half hours online course will provide an overview of the importance of correct vaccine management in clinical settings from ordering and receiving vaccines and managing stock through to maintaining cold chain and taking immediate actions in the event of a cold chain breach. Participants will learn about the roles and responsibilities of immunisation providers in maintaining cold chain and risk management strategies to protect vaccines from a cold chain breach.

Immunisation training videos

As part of the project, six immunisation training videos have been produced for training purposes to illustrate the following topics:

- How to administer vaccines
- First contact with a vaccine-hesitant parent
- Doctor speaking to a vaccine-hesitant mother
- Yarning about immunisation–Protecting your baby
- Setting up a purpose-built vaccine refrigerator
- How to pack an esky with vaccines.

These videos can be accessed on the Queensland Health website at

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/immunisation/service-providers/online-courses-for-immunisation-service-providers>

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Consent forms no longer required: dTpa and pregnant women

As of 1 July 2018, pertussis-containing vaccine for pregnant women was included and funded under the National Immunisation Program (NIP). **Please report these vaccinations directly to AIR.**

The Queensland Health information sheet about dTpa and pregnancy is still available to assist with the informed consent process. Immunisation providers can find the consent form on the Queensland Health website at https://www.health.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/441042/whooping-cough-factsheet-web.pdf

For more information about the free whooping cough and influenza vaccines for pregnant women provisions under the National Immunisation Program, go to the Australian Government Department of Health website at: <https://beta.health.gov.au/news-and-events/news/free-whooping-cough-and-influenza-vaccines-for-pregnant-women>

NB: The HPV Register will not accept HPV data from 1 November 2018 onwards

In September 2018, the HPV Register transferred all records to AIR. Log on to AIR to check an individual's previous HPV immunisation history or to report a HPV immunisation.

National Guidelines for Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres and Providers

The Australian Government Department of Health has developed new *National Guidelines for Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres and Providers*. It is expected that the new national guidelines will be launched in November 2018.

Why new guidelines?

On 16 June 2016, the *Biosecurity Act 2015* came into effect, replacing the *Quarantine Act 1908*. Under the new Act, the Australian Government Department of Health has statutory responsibilities for the control of yellow fever within Australia including national guidelines regarding yellow fever vaccination that comply with WHO requirements. New legislation provided an opportunity for a review of yellow fever vaccination centre appointment and registration processes. Following the review, new national guidelines were developed.

What has changed?

The term 'provider' now includes nurse practitioners whose scope of practice includes immunisation, as well as general practitioners. In addition to the development of the new *National Guidelines for Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres and Providers*, the Australian Government Department of Health commissioned the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) to develop an online learning module to support the national registration process. The online learning module will be located on the ACRRM website at www.acrrm.org.au

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Upon successful completion of the online learning course, providers will be issued with a certificate of completion. Certificates will be valid for three years and all practitioners seeking to continue registration must complete the online course every three years. A national register of individual practitioners who have completed the online learning module will be maintained by the Australian Government Department of Health.

All current yellow fever vaccination providers will be required to complete the online learning module within three years and by December 2021 must have a valid certificate of completion to maintain registration.

Each state and territory will continue to be responsible for the approval of Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres within their jurisdiction. A publicly available register of approved vaccination centres within Queensland can be found on the Queensland Health website at <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/immunisation/registration-qualifications>.

All practices currently registered with Queensland Health as Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres will retain their status if a previously registered practitioner remains with that practice to prescribe the vaccine, supervise administration of vaccine to patients and sign the WHO approved *International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis*. Only approved yellow fever vaccination centres can order and purchase yellow fever vaccine. Stamaril® produced by Sanofi-Aventis Pty Ltd is the yellow fever vaccine registered for use in Australia.

Practitioners seeking to register their practices for the first time as yellow fever vaccination centres (YFVC) in Queensland will be required to download and complete an online *YFVC Application* form and *Conditions of Appointment* form which will be available soon on the Queensland Health immunisation registration and qualifications webpage at <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/immunisation/registration-qualifications>



All practitioners intending to prescribe yellow fever vaccine will be required to complete the national online learning module and must produce copies of their certificates with the practice's application. Application forms must be sent to the local public health unit for assessment.

Approved practices will receive notification from Queensland Health in writing and will be issued with an official yellow fever vaccination centre stamp bearing a unique accreditation number. These practices will then be added to the online register of Queensland Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres.

Further information

Queensland's Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres will soon receive further information including a fact sheet from the Australian Government Department of Health regarding the new national guidelines.

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