

# Queensland Meningococcal B (MenB) Vaccination Program

## Consumer information sheet

Meningococcal disease is a rare but severe infection that occurs when meningococcal bacteria invade the body from the nose or throat.

Meningococcal bacteria are carried in the nose and throat of a small proportion of healthy people (about 10%) and are spread through close prolonged contact. The bacteria are more commonly found in teenagers and young adults. There are several different strains of meningococcal bacteria. Worldwide, the main strains that cause meningococcal disease are A, B, C, W and Y.

Most people with meningococcal infection fully recover, but some people can develop long-term health complications including limb deformity, skin scarring, deafness and possible loss of brain function.

### The Queensland Meningococcal B Vaccination Program

Beginning in 2024, the Queensland MenB Vaccination Program provides free meningococcal B (menB) vaccine to eligible Queensland infants, children and adolescents. MenB vaccine is recommended for these age groups as they are at increased risk of invasive meningococcal B disease.

The following Queenslanders who have not yet started or completed an age-appropriate course of menB vaccination will be eligible for Queensland MenB Vaccination Program:

- Infants, 6 weeks to 12 months of age.
- Catch up vaccination will be offered for children aged over 12 months to less than 2 years.
- Adolescents aged 15 to 19 years inclusive (15-<20 years).

Once vaccination is commenced during the eligibility period, a person remains eligible for their second dose, regardless of age.

### Can my baby have the menB vaccine with the other scheduled vaccines?

MenB vaccine can be safely administered with other National Immunisation Program (NIP) vaccines.

The two primary doses of menB vaccine can be given at the same time as the standard NIP vaccines at 6 weeks and 4 months of age. The third dose (booster) can be given at the same time as the standard NIP 12-month vaccines.

## Common side effects following menB vaccination

Common side effects following menB vaccination include:

- Fever
- Pain
- Redness, swelling or a nodule (small hard lump) at the injection site
- Irritability
- Sleepiness
- Unusual crying and change in appetite
- Headache and feeling unwell (more commonly reported among adolescents and young adults).

Talk to your immunisation provider or call 13HEALTH for information about these possible reactions and how to manage them.

If you are concerned about your child's reaction to the menB vaccine, please seek medical advice.

## Why is paracetamol recommended for children less than 2 years of age before and after receiving menB vaccine?

Fever is a common reaction following any vaccine, but it is more common with the menB vaccine.

Paracetamol will reduce the likelihood of high-grade fever for children less than 2 years of age. It is recommended that parents/carers give children the first dose of paracetamol 30 minutes before vaccination, or as soon as practicable after the vaccine is given.

After vaccination it is also recommended that a further 2 doses of paracetamol are given 6 hours apart, even if the child does not have a fever. If a child develops a fever which is not adequately controlled following these recommendations, refer to the dosing schedule on the paracetamol bottle or seek medical advice.

## Where can I go to be vaccinated?

MenB vaccine is available through a network of more than 2,000 Queensland Health Immunisation Program registered vaccination service providers, including GPs, pharmacies, community vaccination clinics, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services.

MenB vaccination will also be delivered in Year 10 through the Queensland School Immunisation Program.

## MenB vaccine safety

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.

MenB vaccine can be safely administered with other scheduled childhood vaccines.

## MenB vaccine and pregnancy

The MenB vaccine is not routinely recommended during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. However, the menB vaccine can be given if your GP recommends it. This may be if you are at particular risk of meningococcal B disease. Relevant age groups will be asked if they are pregnant before receiving the vaccine.

## Will menB vaccine included in the requirements under the Commonwealth Government's 'No Jab No Pay' or the Queensland Government's 'No Jab no Play' policies?

Funded MenB vaccine is **not** assessed as part of the eligibility requirements for family assistance payments under the Commonwealth Government's 'No Jab No Pay' policy, or the Queensland Government's vaccination legislation for early childhood education and care services.

## What will be funded/free?

The menB vaccine will be provided for free to eligible people. A consultation/administration fee may be charged to people at the vaccination service provider's discretion.

## I paid for MenB vaccines for my child previously. Do they need to have any more doses now they are in Year 10?

If your child has already received a valid and complete meningococcal B vaccination course, there is no recommendation to repeat the course however they remain eligible to receive a funded menB vaccination course when aged between 15 and 19 years (inclusive).

## My child has one dose of Bexsero® many years ago, do they need to start the course again?

If a child/adolescent has received a valid dose of Bexsero®, and this can be confirmed on the Australian Immunisation Register or with the provision of written vaccination records, they will not need to start the course again.

## Can people who are not eligible for Medicare be provided with Queensland funded menB vaccines?

No. Eligibility for the Queensland MenB Vaccination Program is linked to the eligibility for Medicare benefits.

Note, refugees and humanitarian entrants settled in Queensland are Medicare eligible and are therefore eligible to be vaccinated under this program.

## Can visitors to Queensland be provided with Queensland funded menB vaccines?

No. The Queensland MenB Vaccination Program is for residents of Queensland who are Medicare eligible.

## Can I be reimbursed if I have already paid for a menB vaccination?

No. Reimbursement is not available to those who accessed menB vaccination prior to the commencement of the program.

## Why is the Queensland Government funding a Queensland MenB Vaccination Program?

Meningococcal disease is a serious infection that can cause significant illness, disability and death. Around one-third of children and adolescents who survive meningococcal disease develop permanent complications. With improved control of other strains of meningococcal disease through vaccination, the menB strain is emerging as the most common cause of illness and death from meningococcal disease in Queensland.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends menB vaccination for several at risk groups, in addition to those currently included under the NIP schedule. The implementation of a Queensland funded menB vaccination program for children and adolescents is in accordance with ATAGI's recommendations. The Queensland MenB Vaccination Program aims to remove financial barriers to vaccination, improve vaccine uptake, and improve the protection that menB vaccination provides against meningococcal disease.