

Frequently Asked Questions for Meningococcal ACWY Vaccine in Schools

What is Meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal bacteria are carried in the nose and throat of healthy individuals and are spread through prolonged household or intimate contact, for example kissing. Meningococcal disease is caused by multiple strains of meningococcal bacteria. This programme addresses the A, C, W and Y strains.

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

Symptoms include fever, headache, vomiting, stiff neck or sore muscles, sometimes followed by a red or purple rash. The disease can progress very quickly and can lead to death or permanent disability.

Why is the Meningococcal ACWY vaccination program targeting Year 10 students?

Older teenagers and young adults are at increased risk of meningococcal disease, more likely to carry the bacteria in their nose and throat, and more likely to spread the bacteria to others. The vaccination program aims to protect young people and reduce risks for the community as a whole by decreasing the number of people carrying the bacteria in their nose and throat.

ACT School Immunisation Program is offering every Year 10 student a free immunisation against meningococcal ACWY which is given as one injection.

How many doses will be required?

One dose of meningococcal ACWY vaccine is required.

Do I need to sign the consent card for my adolescent to be vaccinated?

Yes, a completed consent card signed by a parent/legal guardian must be returned to the school for a child to be vaccinated when the Schools Health Team visits.

What happens if I don't return the consent card?

Students will not be vaccinated without a completed and signed consent card.

What if I don't want my adolescent to be vaccinated through the School Immunisation Program?

If you do not wish your adolescent to be vaccinated through the school program, complete and sign the 'No I do not consent' section of the consent card. The consent card needs to be returned to the school even if you are not consenting to vaccination. This helps the School Health Team identify which students have returned their consent cards when they are at the school.

What can I do if students are absent or unwell when vaccination occurs at school?

If you have returned the consent form and signed 'yes' to this vaccine, a letter will be sent to your postal address after the School Health Team have visited the school. This will provide information on how to access the vaccine through your GP. While the vaccine is provided free by the ACT Government, the doctor may charge a consultation fee.

Will I receive a record of this vaccine?

All students are given a vaccine record on the day they receive the vaccine. Please keep this record in a safe place for future reference.

The School Health Team will be uploading your young person's vaccine details onto the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

You can obtain a record of your adolescent's immunisation history from AIR through the [Department of Human Services website](#). Once you have registered for the online services you will be able to request a history statement. Alternatively, you can call AIR on 1800 653 809 and request that a statement is sent to you.

What if my adolescent has previously had Meningococcal C vaccine?

The free meningococcal ACWY vaccine will safely boost their protection against the C strain they had as a baby and will also protect against A, W and Y strains.

Is the vaccine effective and safe?

Yes, studies have shown that the effectiveness of the meningococcal ACWY vaccine is between 80 and 85 percent in young people. It does not contain any live bacteria and cannot cause meningococcal disease. The vaccine is safe in children, adolescents and adults. Most side effects to the vaccine are minor and quickly disappear.

What should I do if a reaction occurs after vaccination?

If your adolescent complains of tenderness at the injection site put a cold damp cloth on the area to relieve the pain.

Only give paracetamol (as directed) if pain and fever are present.

If they have an unexpected reaction that you are concerned about please contact your local doctor or seek medical attention. All serious or unexpected reactions should be reported to the Health Protection Service, Immunisation Unit on 6205 2300.

Where can I find more information?

Please visit <http://www.health.act.gov.au/our-services/immunisation/high-school-immunisation-program> or contact Health Protection Service, Immunisation Unit, on (02) 6205 2300

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