

Frequently Asked Questions for Meningococcal ACWY Vaccine

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 young adults?

Young adults and older teenagers 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 adults and reduce risks for the community as a whole by decreasing the number of people carrying the bacteria in their nose and throat.

Where can young adults access the vaccine?

The vaccine is free to students in year 10 through a school-based vaccination program.

For people aged between 16 and 19 years, there will be a free catch-up program through their GP in the first year of the program, beginning in February 2018. While the vaccine is provided free by the ACT Government, the doctor may charge a consultation fee.

How many doses will be required?

One dose of meningococcal ACWY vaccine is required.

Will it take long for immunity to develop after having the vaccine?

It takes approximately two weeks for immunity to develop after meningococcal ACWY vaccination.

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.

If I am pregnant or breastfeeding can I have Meningococcal ACWY vaccine?

The meningococcal ACWY vaccine is not routinely recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women. The vaccine can be given to women at increased risk of meningococcal disease where the benefits of immunisation outweigh the risks to the developing baby or breastfed infant. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you should discuss vaccination with your GP.

What if young adults have previously had Meningococcal C vaccine?

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

What should I do if a reaction occurs after vaccination?

If you feel tenderness at the injection site, put a cold damp cloth on the area to relieve the pain.

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

If you 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 (02) 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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