Protecting Year 10, 11 and 12 students against meningococcal disease

Meningococcal disease is an uncommon but serious disease and adolescents are at increased risk.

Earlier this year the ACT government announced a Year 10 schools-based meningococcal vaccination program and a time-limited catch up campaign for young people aged 16 to 19 years through general practitioners (GPs). The vaccine distributed through the program is effective at providing protection against four types of meningococcal disease (A, C, W and Y).

The 2018 Year 10 Program has been very successful, with 79 per cent of Year 10 students now vaccinated in the ACT. Building on the success of the Year 10 program, ACT Health has announced that schools-based vaccination clinics will be extended to Year 11 and 12 students during terms 3 and 4 this year.

Young people aged 15 to 19 years who are yet to receive the meningococcal vaccine can get the free vaccine through their GP until the end of 2018. Immunisation providers are encouraged to continue proactively targeting this group through opportunistic MenACWY vaccination before December 31 2018. For more information visit: http://www.health.act.gov.au/our-services/immunisation/adolescents

University Market Day MenACWY Vaccine Clinics

An ACT Health team, comprised of staff from the Communicable Disease Control Immunisation Unit and nurses from the Schools Health Team, ran a pop-up MenACWY vaccine clinic at both the Australian National University and University of Canberra’s O-Week Market Days. Seventy seven eligible students received the MenACWY vaccine through the pop-up clinics, with many more taking away brochures and information about how to access the vaccine at a later date.

Providing convenient access to the MenACWY vaccine at O-Week Market Days is just one of the strategies being utilised to increase the number of young adults being vaccinated.

Young people aged 15 to 19 years who are yet to receive the MenACWY vaccine can get the free vaccine through their GP until the end of 2018.
Influenza (flu) vaccination coverage in children aged between 6 months and under 5 years

Since April this year children aged 6 months to under five years have been eligible to receive free flu vaccine through their GPs and ACT Health Early Childhood Immunisation Clinics.

The Program has been a tremendous success. As of 30 July, 42 per cent of the ACT’s children aged 6 months to under 5 years have received at least one dose of the flu vaccine this season. This compares to 5 per cent vaccination coverage for this age group at the end of 2017.

Please remember that 2 doses of the vaccine are required for children in this age group if it is their first year being vaccinated against the flu.

Current national data shows that as of 30 June 2018, ACT was leading the nation in influenza vaccine coverage among non-Indigenous children under 5 years and was above the national average for Indigenous children under 5 years.

The ACT Health Immunisation Unit would like to thank all immunisation providers across the ACT for their commitment and for playing an integral role in helping the ACT achieve these results. The Unit would also like to thank providers for their patience and cooperation during stock management activities conducted by the Immunisation Unit, to ensure there was sufficient vaccine supply for high-risk groups during the period of vaccine shortages across the nation.

REMINDER - It's not too late for the flu shot

Influenza vaccine is provided free in the ACT for:

- Anyone aged 65 years and over;
- Children aged 6 months to under 5 years;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 15 years and over;
- Pregnant women; and;
- Anyone over 6 months old who has a medical condition associated with a high risk of influenza disease complications (including heart conditions, asthma and other chronic lung conditions, diabetes, kidney problems or impaired immunity).

The flu vaccine can be given until the expiry date listed on the vaccines (some until February 2019). Flu vaccine deliveries will continue until this time. The Immunisation Unit now have sufficient supplies of influenza vaccine for those eligible for government funded vaccines.
Flu in the ACT

ACT Health conducts surveillance for laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza in the ACT each influenza season. The Disease Surveillance Unit regularly prepares an influenza report which includes current data on influenza notifications in the ACT.

Between 1 January and 5 August 2018, there were 200 notifications of influenza reported to ACT Health, of which only 20 occurred in the previous fortnight. In comparison, there were 637 notifications of influenza reported to ACT Health during the same time period in 2017. The low numbers of influenza notifications in recent weeks indicates that the 2018 influenza season has not yet commenced.

This year the Vaccine Management Unit have delivered almost 90,000 doses of influenza vaccine, enough to vaccinate at least 1 in 5 Canberrans.

For more information on the influenza reports and tips to beat the flu this season visit ACT Health’s Winter Wellbeing and Flu website through: http://health.act.gov.au/healthy-living/winter-wellbeing-and-flu

Figure. Number of influenza notifications, by week and year of onset, 1 January 2013 to 5 August 2018, ACT.
China Vaccine Scandal

Recently the British Medical Journal published an article on potentially compromised rabies and diphtheria, typhoid, and pertussis (DTPa) vaccines being distributed in China.

Changsheng Biotechnology was ordered to cease production of its rabies vaccine on 15 July 2018 after being found to have forged production and inspection data on its rabies vaccine. China’s Food and Drug Administration were reportedly tipped-off by an ex-employee. It is unclear how the substandard vaccine might affect people, but no adverse events have been reported so far.

Days later drug authorities publicised a report that the biotechnology company had sold over 250,000 faulty doses of DTPa last year. A local internet blogger sent the story viral in a now deleted post that sparked confusion and anger amongst concerned parents. Local police swarmed the company on 23 July 2018 and arrested five executives including the chair of the company.

Further investigations and recalls are underway with President and Communist Party leader Xi Jinping urging severe punishment of those responsible, describing the scandal as “vile and shocking”.

The vaccines in question are not distributed in Australia.
For further information: https://www.bmj.com/content/362/bmj.k3244

Source: https://www.rappler.com/world/regions/asia-pacific/208088-public-anger-china-vaccine-scandal
Principles of Safe Vaccine Storage

Immunisation service providers must:

- Store vaccines in a purpose-built vaccine refrigerator.
- Nominate a staff member to be responsible for vaccine management, and a back-up staff member to take responsibility in their absence.
- Ensure policies, procedures and protocols are in place for vaccine management in each facility.
- Ensure all people involved in vaccine transport, storage and administration are trained in vaccine management to ensure the vaccines remain effective and potent.
- Perform vaccine storage self-audits at least once every 12 months.
- Perform temperature monitoring of vaccine refrigerators twice daily.
- Ensure plans are in place for responses to cold chain breaches and power failures in each facility.
- Ensure vaccines are stored in their original packaging in order to protect them from temperature fluctuations and ultraviolet light, which may affect the viability of the vaccines.
- Report temperatures outside the +2°C to +8°C range to the ACT Health Immunisation Unit on (02) 6205 2300. Do not use or discard vaccine until advice is given.
- Follow the guidelines outlined in the National Storage Guidelines, Strive for 5 for using ice packs/gel packs and monitoring vaccines in coolers and cold boxes.


Cold chain audits

Cold chain audit forms have been sent to immunisation providers across the ACT. Please conduct your audit as soon as possible.

The Vaccine Management Unit will also be undertaking cold chain audits on immunisation provider fridges this month. These will be conducted during your scheduled delivery.
National Immunisation Program Schedule changes from 1 July 2018

Since 1 July 2018, the childhood immunisation schedule has been updated based on the advice of clinical experts. There are changes to the vaccines given at the 12 and 18 month schedule points.

Changes to early childhood vaccinations include:

- A pneumococcal vaccine (Prevenar 13) will be offered to all children at 12 months of age (moved from 6 months of age);
- A new vaccine (Nimenrix) protecting against 4 strains (ACWY) of meningococcal disease (up from only the C strain) will be offered to all children at 12 months of age and;
- A vaccine (Act-HIB) protecting against Haemophilus influenzae type b will be offered to all children aged 18 months of age.

If your patient has had one or more meningococcal ACWY vaccine doses before 12 months of age, a booster dose from 12 months of age, and at least 2 months after a previous dose, is required for the best protection.
MMR Vaccine free for adults
The ACT Government funds measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine for adults. Anyone born in or after 1966 and has not previously received two measles containing vaccines is eligible for free MMR vaccine.

Check for MMRV
Immunisation coverage rates suggest that some children have missed MMRV at their 18 month scheduled visit. When administering immunisations to four year olds please check that the 18 month MMRV was given. If it has been missed please administer as soon as possible or with other vaccines at 4 years.

Additional vaccinations for infants and young children
In addition to the routine funded vaccines on the National Immunisation Program, some infants and children require extra vaccines. This is because they have a higher risk of getting a vaccine preventable disease and/or a higher risk of complications if they do get the disease. Additional vaccines are funded for eligible children.
Please contact the Immunisation Unit on 6205 2300 if you require any further information or resources.

Antenatal Pertussis Vaccination
Vaccination of pregnant women with pertussis vaccine has been shown to be effective in preventing pertussis disease in newborn infants via the transfer of maternal antibodies in utero.
The vaccine is free for pregnant women and can be administered anytime in the third trimester up until delivery. It is however recommended that the vaccine be given at 28 weeks gestation or as soon as possible afterward.

Digital handbook