

## Consumer – Frequently Asked Questions

# Meningococcal B Immunisation Program

### What is the program?

The State Government funded Meningococcal B (MenB) Immunisation Program provides free meningococcal B vaccinations for eligible children and young people in South Australia.

### Why is this program being introduced?

Over the last 18 years, invasive meningococcal B disease in South Australia has not declined, unlike in other states. Young children, particularly those less than 2 years of age, have the highest incidence of invasive meningococcal B disease. The second highest at risk group are those aged between 15 and 20 years. Meningococcal B vaccine is recommended for these age groups as they are at increased risk of invasive meningococcal B disease.

### Who is eligible for the program?

To be eligible for the program, children and young people must be residents of South Australia, have a Medicare card and be within the age groups below:

- > The childhood program is offered to those aged 6 weeks to 12 months and will begin on **1 October 2018**.
- > A childhood catch-up program will be available for those from 12 months to less than 4 years of age. The childhood catch-up program will begin on 1 October 2018 and end on 31 December 2019.
- > The young person's program will begin on **1 February 2019**. It is proposed that students in Years 10 and 11 will be offered vaccination during the 2019 School Immunisation Program. The catch-up program for Year 11 students will end on 31 December 2019. The Year 10 program will be ongoing.
- > A catch-up program will be available for those aged 17 to less than 21 from their usual immunisation provider. This catch-up program will end 31 December 2019.

### How many doses of vaccine are needed?

All age groups will receive the Bexsero<sup>®</sup> vaccine (GlaxoSmithKline) in the program. It is important to note that:

- > **All children up to 12 months** of age receive 3 doses of vaccine.
- > **All those from 12 months** of age and above receive 2 doses of vaccine.

Your immunisation provider should report all Bexsero doses administered to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

### Can my baby have the Bexsero with the other scheduled vaccines?

Yes, Bexsero can be safely administered with other National Immunisation Program (NIP) vaccines. However, Bexsero should be given in a different limb to other vaccines. Your immunisation provider will explain how multiple vaccines can be given in the same visit.

You do not need to wait for the usual schedule points to start the course. For example if your child is 5 months old, they can start the course from 1 October 2018 and receive 3 doses of vaccine.

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### What if my child starts the course and is already nearly 4 years old? Will they get the second dose for free?

Yes. Your child will receive the full course for free if they started the course while in an eligible age group. For example, if your child's first dose was given at 3 years and 11 months, they can complete the course with the second dose 8 weeks later even though they would now be 4 years old.

### I paid for a dose/doses of Bexsero on a private script. Can my child have the rest of the course for free?

Yes. All those in the eligible age groups can receive the free vaccine to complete their course. Take any immunisation records you have to your immunisation provider so all doses can be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register. You cannot be refunded for the dose/s you paid for privately.

### What if my teenager was involved in the *Meningococcal B Vaccine Herd Immunity Study – B Part of It?*

Individuals in Years 10, 11 and 12 in 2017 and 2018 may have already had the meningococcal B vaccination through the Meningococcal B Vaccine Herd Immunity Study-“B Part of It”. If your teenager received the recommended 2 doses through the study, no further doses are required.

If you are unsure how many doses may have been given, contact the study immunisation provider for a record of immunisation.

### Will the meningococcal B vaccine be included as part of the immunisation requirements for Family Assistance Payments?

No. This is a State Government funded vaccine and is not part of the National Immunisation Program. This means it is not assessed as part of the immunisation requirements for Family Assistance Payments.

### Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. 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. Bexsero can be safely administered with other scheduled childhood vaccines.

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

Fever is a common reaction following any vaccine, but it is more common with Bexsero. 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 immunisation, or as soon as practical after the immunisation.

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 does develop a fever which is not adequately controlled using these recommendations, refer to the dosing schedule on the paracetamol bottle or seek medical advice.

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## What are other common side effects following Bexsero?

In addition to fever, other common side effects following Bexsero include:

- > pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
- > irritability
- > sleepiness
- > unusual crying and change in appetite.

Headache and malaise are more commonly reported among adolescents and adults.

Paracetamol will assist in managing these reactions.

Due to the local reactions Bexsero can cause, your immunisation provider will give the Bexsero vaccine in a separate limb from other vaccines.

Your immunisation provider will explain the commonly expected and rare reactions after vaccination, and give you the *After Vaccination Information* leaflet following vaccination for further information.

## What if I am concerned about any side effects?

If you are concerned, seek further advice from your doctor, immunisation provider, or phone the SA Health Immunisation Section on 1300 232 272 Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm. After these hours contact *healthdirect* Australia on 1800 022 222.

## Can Bexsero be given in pregnancy?

Bexsero vaccine is not routinely recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Bexsero can be given if your doctor 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.

## Where can I go to be immunised?

The childhood program will be available through GPs, local government immunisation clinics, Aboriginal Health Services, Child and Family Health Services (CaFHS), Country Health SA Local Health Network (CHSALHN) and the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN).

It is proposed that the adolescent program will be offered through the School Immunisation Program for students in Year 10 and 11 during 2019. The catch-up program for those aged 17 to less than 21 can be accessed through your usual immunisation provider.

## Where can I get further information?

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/menbprogram](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/menbprogram)

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation)

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## For more information

**Immunisation Section**  
**Communicable Disease Control Branch**  
**PO Box 6 Rundle Mall SA 5000**  
**Telephone: 1300 232 272**  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation)

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