

Consumer – Frequently Asked Questions

July 2020: Meningococcal B Immunisation Program

What is the program?

The State Government funded Meningococcal B (MenB) Immunisation Program commenced on 1 October 2018, providing free meningococcal B vaccinations for eligible children and young people in South Australia. Meningococcal B vaccine is recommended for these age groups as they are at increased risk of invasive meningococcal B disease.

2020 Ongoing program:

Childhood Program:

For children commencing the course aged 6 weeks to 12 months of age:

- **3 doses** Bexsero® vaccine (GlaxoSmithKline) in total (2 dose primary course + 1 booster).
- Routinely administered with other National Immunisation Program (NIP) vaccines at 6 weeks, 4 months and 12 months of age – aligning with the usual schedule points for NIP vaccines.

School Program:

For students in Year 10

- **2 doses** Bexsero® vaccine with a **minimal** interval of 8 weeks between doses.

What about the Catch-up programs?

- The Childhood Catch-up program ended on the **31 December 2019**.
- The Young Adult Catch-up program ended on the **29 February 2020**.

How many doses of vaccine are needed for those eligible under the ongoing program?

- **All healthy children up to 12 months** of age are recommended receive 3 doses of Bexsero® vaccine (2 primary doses and 1 booster dose).
- Students in Year 10 are recommended to receive 2 doses.

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.

Your immunisation provider will explain how multiple vaccines can be given in the same visit. The two primary doses of Bexsero 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.

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My child is now 2 years old but didn't receive the meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine in 2019. Can they have free vaccines in 2020?

If your child was less than 12 months of age when the program started on the 1 October 2018, they can access free vaccines during 2020 as they are eligible under the *ongoing* Childhood Program for children less than 12 months of age.

My child is 4 years old, but didn't receive two doses of the MenB vaccine in 2019. Can they have free vaccines in 2020?

- If your child was eligible and **started** the MenB course with dose 1 during the Childhood Catch-up Program in 2019, they can complete the course with a free dose 2.
- If your child **did not start** the MenB course with dose 1 during the Childhood Catch-up Program in 2019, they are no longer eligible to receive free Men B vaccines as the Childhood Catch-up Program finished on 31 December 2019.

My child was in Year 10 in 2019, but missed out. Can they still have free MenB vaccines in 2020?

Yes. The Year 10 School Immunisation Program offering the MenB vaccine is part of an *ongoing* program, and was not part of a catch-up program. If students missed out in Year 10, they can complete the 2 dose course in 2020.

My child was in Year 11 in 2019, but missed out. Can they still have free Men B vaccines in 2020?

- If your child was eligible and **started the MenB** course and had dose 1 during the Young Adult Catch-up Program, they can complete their course with a free dose 2.
- If your child **did not start** the MenB course with dose 1 during the Young adult Catch-up Program they are no longer eligible to receive free Men B vaccines as the Young adult Catch-up Program finished on the 29 February 2020.

Who else can have free meningococcal vaccines?

As at 1 July 2020 changes to the National Immunisation Program included the Bexsero vaccine for Aboriginal children less than two years of age. Meningococcal B and ACWY vaccines are also free for people of all ages with specific medical conditions

Speak with your immunisation provider for further information.

Will Bexsero be included in the immunisation requirements under the Commonwealth Government's 'No Jab No Pay' or the State Government's 'Early Childhood Services immunisation requirements' policies?

No. The 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 State Government's Early Childhood Services and immunisation policy.

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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.

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.

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 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 using these recommendations, refer to the dosing schedule on the paracetamol bottle or seek medical advice.

What are other common side effects following Bexsero?

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

- pain, redness, swelling or nodule (small hard lump) at the injection site
- irritability
- sleepiness
- unusual crying and change in appetite
- headache and generally feeling unwell (more commonly reported among adolescents and young adults).

Paracetamol will assist in managing these reactions. Your immunisation provider will explain the commonly expected reactions 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 or immunisation provider, or phone the SA Health Immunisation Section on 1300 232 272 Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm.

After these hours, visit: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>

Further information is also available under Vaccine Safety on the SA Health website:

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation

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Where can I go to be immunised?

The program is available through GPs, local government immunisation clinics, Aboriginal Health Services, Child and Family Health Services (CaFHS) and the Women's and Children's Health Network (WCHN).

Year 10 students will be offered the vaccine through the School Immunisation Program.

Where can I get further information?

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/menbprogram

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation

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

Public-I2-A2

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