# Meningococcal B vaccination

## A guide for healthcare providers to support conversations about meningococcal B vaccination

## What is meningococcal disease?

**Meningococcal disease is a serious illness that often causes inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and/or blood poisoning (septicaemia). Meningococcal serogroup B (MenB) is the most common cause of invasive meningococcal disease in children, adolescents and young adults.**

### Why is MenB vaccine (Bexsero) funded for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under the age of 2 years?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 2 years of age are 4 times more at risk of getting MenB disease than non-Indigenous children. The vaccine is funded under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) to reduce the rate of MenB disease in young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

### Risk of MenB disease



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children



Non-Indigenous children

### Are other people eligible for the funded MenB vaccine and why?

Yes, all people with the following specified risk conditions are eligible for the funded MenB vaccine:

- inherited defects or deficiency of properdin or complement components, including factor H and factor D
- current or future treatment with eculizumab
- functional or anatomical asplenia.

In addition, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the following specified risk conditions are eligible for funded MenB vaccine:

- HIV, regardless of disease stage or CD4+ cell count
- haematopoietic stem cell transplant.

These people are at a higher risk of getting meningococcal disease. MenB vaccine is funded for them at any age to give them extra protection.

### Which age groups can receive the funded MenB vaccine?

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from 6 weeks of age**



**Other members of the community (at any age and including non-Indigenous people) with risk conditions**



### Catch-up vaccination

Catch-up vaccination is available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children if they start their doses before 2 years of age. For children requiring catch-up doses, the number of and interval between doses depend on the age at which the first meningococcal vaccine dose was administered.

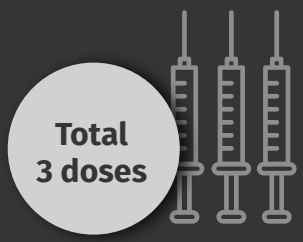
Refer to the meningococcal disease chapter in the Australian Immunisation Handbook.

NCIRS National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance

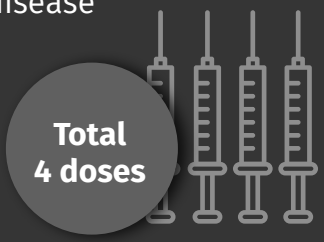
Prepared by former National Indigenous Immunisation Coordinator Katrina Clark and the team at NCIRS.

## When and how many MenB vaccine (Bexsero) doses are needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?

**One dose** at 2 months (can be given from 6 weeks of age)
**One dose** at 4 months
**One dose** at 12 months




An extra dose at 6 months is needed for children with certain risk conditions. Refer to Meningococcal disease section in the Australian Immunisation Handbook




## Do children need paracetamol with every dose of Bexsero?

**Yes paracetamol must be given to all children under the age of 2 years** with **every dose** of Bexsero. This is because of the increased risk of fever associated with receiving Bexsero:

- **Give one dose of paracetamol within 30 minutes before, or as soon as possible, after vaccination.**
- **Two more doses of paracetamol are recommended 6 hours apart after vaccination regardless of whether the child has a fever.**

Further doses of paracetamol may be given if needed. Seek medical advice if fever continues after 48 hours.

**It is important to remind parents that the child will need one dose of paracetamol 30 minutes before vaccination.**

## What are the other common reactions to Bexsero?

- Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
- Irritability
- Sleepiness
- Crying and unsettled
- Change in appetite

**If a reaction seems severe or persists, parents or carers should seek medical advice from their GP or Aboriginal Medical Service as soon as possible, or go directly to a hospital.**

## Where can Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people get the MenB vaccine?

- Immunisation clinics
- General practice
- Some hospitals
- Some local councils
- Aboriginal Medical Services

## Can Bexsero be given with other vaccines?

Yes, Bexsero can be given with other scheduled vaccines. However, it must be given in a separate limb to other vaccines.

**Useful links/info**

- NCIRS Meningococcal vaccines for Australians fact sheet
- NCIRS Meningococcal vaccines for Australians FAQ
- Australian Immunisation Handbook
- ATAGI clinical advice on changes to recommendations for the use and funding of meningococcal vaccines 2020
- Vaccinate to protect your baby against meningococcal B – brochure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

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