



3 March 2017

Dear Principal,

The Western Australian ACWY vaccination program for adolescents has been launched. This is in response to a recent increase in meningococcal infection caused by a particular type of the bacteria, 'serogroup W'.

Please be advised that immunisation nurses will be contacting your schools shortly to arrange vaccination visits. Your support in assisting this program to run smoothly is appreciated.

We anticipate you may want to share some information on this program with parents of your students through your website and newsletters. To this end, we have provided some content below to be used in those communications and a link to the relevant page on the Department of Health website.

[http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/J\\_M/Meningococcal-disease](http://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/J_M/Meningococcal-disease)

#### **What is the Meningococcal ACWY Vaccination Program?**

The Meningococcal ACWY vaccination program is in response to a recent increase of meningococcal infection caused by a particular type of the bacteria, 'serogroup W'. Individuals aged between 15-19 years within the WA community will be targeted to receive this vaccine in order to reduce the spread of this disease.

#### **Why is the program targeting 15-19 year olds?**

This age group experience some of the highest rates of meningococcal carriage and illness. Once infected, they can transmit the bacteria to people who are at increased risk of infection, including young children. It is expected that providing the meningococcal W (Men W) vaccine to this age group will reduce the spread of this potentially life threatening infection within the WA community.

#### **Why is this targeted vaccination program necessary?**

Although numbers are low, Men W cases have been increasing each year since 2013 with one case notified in that year and 14 cases in 2016. Two more cases have been notified in 2017. Prior to 2013, serogroup W was uncommon with only six cases diagnosed in the 13 year period from 2000 to 2012.

#### **Which vaccine will be used?**

The meningococcal ACWY vaccine will be used. This vaccine protects against four groups of meningococcal bacteria: A, C, W and Y. The conjugate meningococcal ACWY vaccine Nimenrix®, supplied in Australia by Pfizer will be used in this program

#### **How will the program work?**

In 2017, WA Health and local council nursing teams will conduct the vaccinations at schools to students in Years 10, 11 and 12. Additional vaccination clinics will be conducted at community health clinics to capture 18--19 year olds and other age-eligible persons not attending high school. In 2018 and 2019 the program would target incoming Year 10 students only.

Parents can expect to receive Men W vaccination consent materials through their child's school in Terms 2 /or 3. They are urged to complete the form and return to their child's school promptly to protect their child and their community.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Paul Effler  
**Medical Coordinator, Prevention and Control Program**  
**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL DIRECTORATE**