

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.

SA Meningococcal B Immunisation 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.

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 to 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 vaccine 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.

If my child has not received the free meningococcal B (MenB) vaccines, can they still have it?

If your child was born on or after 1 October 2017 and are residents of South Australia, they can access free vaccines now as they are still eligible as part of the childhood program.



My child missed out on this vaccine in Year 10. Can they still have free MenB vaccines?

Yes. The Year 10 School Immunisation Program offering the MenB vaccine is part of an ongoing program. If students were eligible but missed out in Year 10, they can still have free vaccines before they turn 20 years of age.

I paid for MenB vaccines for my child previously. Do they need to have any more doses now they are in Year 10?

All year 10 students are eligible for a course of funded MenB vaccine (Bexsero®).

A valid course for this age group, as listed in the Australian Immunisation Handbook, is two doses of MenB vaccine at least 8 weeks apart.

In South Australia, for students who may have already received doses of meningococcal B vaccines in childhood, the adolescent meningococcal B vaccine recommendations are:

- Adolescents previously vaccinated with a valid complete course of meningococcal B vaccine prior to 14yo are recommended to receive 1 dose in Year 10 (dose 3 / adolescent booster dose)
- Adolescents previously vaccinated with only one valid dose of a meningococcal B prior to 14yo are recommended to receive 2 doses in Year 10 with a minimal interval of 8 weeks (dose 2 and 3 / adolescent booster dose)

Individuals who have certain medical conditions that increase their risk of invasive meningococcal disease may also require additional doses. Speak to your doctor or immunisation provider for further information.

Who else can have free meningococcal vaccines?

As of 1 July 2020, changes to the National Immunisation Program included the MenB vaccine (Bexsero®) for Aboriginal children less than two years of age. MenB and meningococcal 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.

Is the Bexsero 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 age-appropriate 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 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. 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.

Where can I go to be immunised?

The program is available through GPs, local government immunisation clinics, Aboriginal Health Services, participating pharmacists 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
Telephone: 1300 232 272
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisation

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