Health Professionals – Frequently Asked Questions
2020 Update: 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 will end on the 31 December 2019.
- The Young Adult Catch-up Program has been extended until 29 February 2020.

Why has the Young Adult Program been extended?
Vaccine uptake across most of the age groups ranges from 71-93%, apart from the young adult cohort, which is approximately 36% (based on reported dose 1 Bexsero to the Australian Immunisation Register). In an attempt to reach as many people in this age group as possible, the catch-up deadline has been extended.

Does this include Year 11 students?
Yes. Year 11 students are included in the young adult catch-up program (17 to less than 21 years at the commencement of the program). If students have not received any doses, or have to yet to receive dose 2, they now have until the end of February 2020 to do so.

If dose 1 has been administered before the end of the catch-up period, is dose 2 still funded?
Yes. Any individual, who started a course of Bexsero during the funded catch up period, can complete the course with a funded vaccine, even if this is after the end dates of the catch up program/s.
- 31 December 2019 for the Childhood Catch-up Program;
- 29 February 2020 for the Young Adult Catch-up Program.

Updated November 2019
If individuals were eligible as part of the ongoing programs (less than 12 months and Year 10 in 2019), but have not received Bexsero, can they receive funded vaccines in 2020?

Yes. Like with other NIP vaccines, individual’s eligible as part of ongoing programs can receive funded vaccines if they decide to now be vaccinated.

NB: Those commencing the vaccine schedule 12 months of age or older require 2 doses in total. There is a minimum interval of 8 weeks between doses.

Always check the AiR and a person’s immunisation records prior to vaccination. Ensure all doses of Bexsero vaccine administered are correctly reported to the Australian Immunisation Register (AiR).

How do I record doses of administered Bexsero to the AiR?
1. Select record encounter.
2. Select other under schedule.
3. Select Bexsero under vaccine name.
4. Type batch number.
5. Record the correct dose number administered.

Why has the minimal interval changed from 2 months to 8 weeks?
When the state program commenced in 2018, the minimal intervals were as per the 2018 updated Bexsero® product information. The Australian Immunisation Handbook and Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisations (ATAGI) released updated recommendations in the meningococcal chapter later in 2019. The latest recommendations are listed in the Variations from Product Information section of this chapter and have been incorporated into the ongoing 2020 Meningococcal B Program.

Updated November 2019
Can Bexsero be administered with other NIP vaccines?
Yes, Bexsero can be safely administered with other National Immunisation Program (NIP) vaccines. However, it is recommended to administer Bexsero in a separate limb to other NIP vaccines. For example at the 6 week and 4 month schedule points, administer Bexsero in the left leg and Prevenar 13® and Infanrix Hexa® in the right leg (injections to be separated by 2.5cm).
Never mix separate vaccines together. Vaccines must only be reconstituted with the diluent supplied.

What are the recommendations for administration of multiple vaccines at the 12 month schedule point?
A set of principles has been developed to guide the administration of multiple vaccines at the 12 month schedule point. The recommendations are, where possible:
- Administer Bexsero in the left deltoid, Prevenar 13 in the right deltoid, and the MMR and Meningococcal ACWY vaccines in the anterolateral thighs.
- If the child is scheduled for other vaccines, such as influenza, two injections can be given in the anterolateral thigh separated by 2.5cm.
- If all vaccines cannot be given at the same visit, prioritise NIP vaccines at the first visit.

Refer to the NIP schedule and the Principles for Vaccine Administration at 12 Month Schedule Point resources. These principles can also be used to guide the administration of vaccines for other schedule points.

NB: The deltoid muscle is not recommended for intramuscular vaccination of infants <12 months of age.

Why is Bexsero recommended to be administered in a left limb?
Administering Bexsero in the appropriate left limb (anterolateral thigh if < 12 months; deltoid if ≥ 12 months) will enable the easy detection of any injection site reactions from Bexsero and forms part of the Vaccine Safety Plan implemented to support and monitor the Men B Immunisation Program. This recommendation will continue in 2020 to enhance vaccine safety surveillance.

Why is prophylactic paracetamol administration recommended for those less than 2 years of age?
Fever (>38.5°C) following Bexsero administration in children aged less than 2 years is a common and expected adverse event following immunisation. For this reason prophylactic use of paracetamol is recommended with every dose of Bexsero for those less than 2 years of age.

The first dose of paracetamol is recommended within the 30-minute period prior to vaccination, or as soon as practicable after vaccination, regardless of the presence of fever. This is followed by 2 more doses of paracetamol given 6 hours apart, regardless of the presence of fever. Doses of paracetamol should be administered as per manufacturer’s guidelines.

Parents/legal guardians should be given the resource Managing possible fever after meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero®) administration and be able to confidently manage fever.

Updated November 2019
What are the common side effects following vaccination?

Common adverse events following Bexsero vaccine administration include:

- fever (>38.5°C)
- pain or tenderness, swelling, induration and erythema at the injection site
- irritability
- sleepiness
- unusual crying and change in appetite.
- headache and malaise (more commonly reported among adolescents and young adults).

It is important to discuss with parents and individuals what to expect after vaccination, common and uncommon reactions and how to manage them. The SA Health After Vaccination Information leaflet should be provided so parents and individuals know who to contact regarding an adverse event and how to report it.

Adolescents and young people should also be advised about adequate fluid intake and to consider paracetamol if experiencing any side effects.

How do I report an adverse event following immunisation (AEFI)?

Reporting an adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) is an essential part of ongoing vaccine safety monitoring. Report any unexpected, unresolved or prolonged event. To report an AEFI:

- Complete the online Vaccine Reaction Reporting Form - Adverse Event Following Immunisation via the SA Health website, or
- Contact the Immunisation Section on 1300 232 272.

Can Bexero be given in pregnancy?

Bexsero vaccine is not routinely recommended for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Bexsero can be given where clinically indicated, such as those at particular risk of serogroup B meningococcal disease. Assessing for pregnancy should be a routine question during pre-assessment screening for the relevant age groups.

What resources are available to support the program?

Resources for immunisation providers

- National Immunisation Program - SA schedule
- Principles for administration of multiple vaccines at the 12 month schedule point
- Parent poster – paracetamol administration promotion
- Emergency department/GP poster – reminder for clinicians that vaccine related fever should be considered a possible cause of fever in infants and young children (poster to be placed in a clinical area, not the waiting room).
- Child Care Promotional poster (electronic version only).

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Resources for parents:
- Updated page for the SA Child Health and Development Record ‘Blue book’
- Managing possible fever after Bexsero® vaccine administration (to be given to the parent by immunisation provider).

All resources are published on the SA Health website. To order more resources visit http://www.poscat.com.au/ and log in with your six digit Vaccine Account Number.

How do I order vaccines?
- Vaccine ordering is through the routine fortnightly online ordering system https://sa.tollhealthcare.com/
- To be eligible to receive funded Bexsero vaccine, immunisation service providers are required to demonstrate adequate vaccine storage, monitoring and cold chain management processes.

Is Meningococcal B vaccine listed under the Vaccine Administration Code?
Yes. Authorised nurses can administer Bexsero noting the authorisation is conditional to the administration being in accordance with the Vaccine Administration Code.

Is Bexsero included in the requirements under the Commonwealth Government’s ‘No Jab No Pay’ or the SA Government’s ‘Early Childhood Services immunisation requirements’ policies?
No. The state 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.

Where can I get further information?

For more information

Immunisation Section
Communicable Disease Control Branch
PO Box 6 Rundle Mall SA 5000
Telephone: 1300 232 272

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