



Targeted meningococcal ACWY vaccination program – frequently asked questions

What is the targeted vaccination program?

The targeted meningococcal ACWY vaccination program is a 'once off' vaccination program that will be offered to people living in Kalgoorlie, Boulder, Coolgardie and Kambalda. The program is in response to a recent increase in meningococcal infection caused by a particular type of the bacteria, 'serogroup W', in the Kalgoorlie area.

This program will be offered to children four years and under and adolescents aged 15-19 years because they are most at risk of developing this infection, and vaccinating older teenagers has the greatest chance of achieving immunity in the broader community.

The existing childhood meningococcal childhood vaccination program targeting serogroup C will continue. However the meningococcal C vaccine does not protect against serogroup W, which is increasing in WA and nationally.

What is the targeted vaccination program?

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

In the Kalgoorlie area, five cases have been confirmed over a two-month period (October and November 2016), compared to around one per year prior to this. Three of these cases were Aboriginal children aged four years and under from Kalgoorlie.

Why is the targeted vaccination program starting now?

There has been a significant increase in the number of cases of meningococcal disease recorded in the Kalgoorlie area over the past two months – five have been detected when we would normally only see, on average, one case per year. In response, several public health measures are being implemented, including a targeted vaccination program.

As soon as the results of laboratory testing showing that the strain of meningococcal W present in cases in Kalgoorlie was genetically linked, it was decided to commence the targeted vaccination program.

Which vaccine will be used?

The meningococcal ACWY vaccine protects against four groups of meningococcal bacteria: A, C, W and Y. Two of the three brands of conjugate meningococcal ACWY vaccine that are registered for use in Australia will be used – Menveo® (CSL) for those aged two months and over, and Nimenrix® (GSK) for those aged 12 months and over.

What age groups will be targeted?

All children aged two months to four years and under and adolescents aged 15-19 years.

What areas will be included in the program?

The Kalgoorlie area in the Goldfields region, specifically Kalgoorlie, Boulder, Coolgardie and Kambalda.

Why is Esperance not included?

Esperance has not experienced an increase in cases of meningococcal disease over the usual, expected rate in that community during 2016.

Will you be rolling out the program to other parts of the State, if not, why not?

The meningococcal ACWY vaccination program is being implemented in response to an observed increase in cases in one particular geographical area. There is no plan to roll out the program to other parts of WA. Any additional programs will be based on disease trends across the State.

Has this type of intervention been done before, if so where and why?

It is standard public health practice to consider meningococcal vaccination to communities in response to meningococcal outbreaks. The aim is to provide direct protection to those who are vaccinated and to prevent people who carry the meningococcal bacteria in the back of their throat, but who don't display symptoms, from passing the bacteria onto other people.

Recently in WA, a community-wide vaccination program was implemented in a remote community of several hundred people in response to two cases of meningococcal disease caused by serogroup W that occurred within a fortnight. No further cases have been reported in that community.

Who is most at risk from meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease can affect any age group. However, those most at risk of meningococcal disease are children four years and under, particularly Aboriginal children, and adolescents aged 15-19 years.

Of the 27 meningococcal W cases diagnosed in WA since 2000, the majority (37%) of cases were children aged 4 years and under, and 22 per cent were adolescents aged 15-19 years.

Where can people access their vaccine?

The WA Country Health Service Goldfields Public Health team are working with local health services to ensure that the meningococcal W vaccination program is able to reach the target group as quickly as possible. Vaccine will be made available from:

- Population Health at Ware Street, Kalgoorlie
- Block 18 at the Kalgoorlie Health Campus
- Community Health Clinics in Kambalda and Coolgardie
- Bega Aboriginal Medical Service
- participating General Practices.

The local community can call *healthdirect* on 1800 131 231 to find out about vaccine clinic times and other health services that will have the free vaccine available.

What are other hot spots for meningococcal cases in WA?

Meningococcal W cases have occurred in regional areas and in the Perth metropolitan area. Two cases were reported earlier in 2016 in a remote community of several hundred people, and a community vaccination program helped to control this. No other hot spot areas have been identified in WA.

How at risk is the Kalgoorlie community?

Meningococcal disease remains a very uncommon disease in Kalgoorlie. The rise in cases that has been observed in 2016 means that the community needs to be aware of early signs and symptoms

of the disease and seek medical attention if they are concerned. Those most at risk of developing meningococcal disease in Kalgoorlie will have access to the meningococcal ACWY vaccination program.

How effective is the meningococcal ACWY vaccine?

The vaccine is safe and effective. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of the meningococcal ACWY vaccines is between 80 to 85 per cent in adolescents and greater than 90 per cent in infants. Meningococcal ACWY vaccination programs have been implemented in adolescents aged 13-15 years in the UK since 2015, and adolescents aged 11-12 years in the US since 2005, and has been found to be safe and effective.

The community still needs to be mindful of the early signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease and seek medical attention if they are concerned.

What serogroups will the vaccine cover?

The vaccine protects against the meningococcal serogroups A C W and Y. Serogroup W is the one that has been responsible for the recent cases in Kalgoorlie.

How much will this program cost?

To vaccinate the target group of all children aged two months to four years and adolescents aged 15-19 years living in the Kalgoorlie area, it is estimated that the provision of the vaccines only, will cost approximately \$300,000. There will be additional costs for extra staff and medical consumables.

When will it start?

Within days of receiving the first vaccines at Kalgoorlie, which is expected to be at the start of the week beginning 12 December.

What about my other children that are not aged four and under or 15-19 years?

While free vaccinations will only be provided to the target group, it is still possible to have the vaccination privately (cost is typically less than \$100). Please contact your GP to discuss this.

I have heard there is a shortage of meningococcal vaccinations. Is there any chance you will run out?

There is a world-wide shortage of vaccinations for meningococcal serotype B. The targeted vaccination program will vaccinate against meningococcal A C W and Y. We have enough vaccinations for the targeted program.

When will the targeted vaccination program start?

Clinics will become available within days of receiving the first vaccines at Kalgoorlie during the week starting 12 December 2016.

For how long will the campaign run?

Free clinics will be held every day from Monday, 12 December 2016 until Saturday 17 December 2016 and Monday 19 December 2016 until Thursday, 22 December 2016. After this the vaccination will remain available by appointment until 31 March 2017.

Who do I ring to find out about clinic times and locations?

A special hotline has been set up to provide information. The number to call is 1800 131 231 between 8:00am and 8:00pm.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.