



# Year 10 Meningococcal ACWY School Based Immunisation Program 2018

## What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is an uncommon, but sometimes life-threatening illness. The disease is a result of a bacterial infection of the blood and/or the membranes that line the spinal cord and brain.

Although treatable with antibiotics, the infection can progress very rapidly, so it is important that anyone experiencing symptoms of meningococcal disease seeks medical attention promptly.

At any one time, approximately 10 per cent of healthy people carry meningococcal bacteria harmlessly in their nose or throat, and do not become ill.

## How do you get meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal bacteria are spread by respiratory secretions (coughing, sneezing or kissing). The bacteria do not survive more than a few seconds in the environment.

The disease is most likely to be spread only to very close contacts, such as people who live in the same household, sexual contacts and children attending the same day care for more than four continuous hours.

## Why is WA Health implementing a vaccination program for Year 10 students?

Recently there has been an increase in meningococcal infection caused by a particular type of bacteria, 'serogroup W'.

Meningococcal disease can affect any age group. However, some of the highest rates of meningococcal carriage and illness occur among adolescents and this age group can transmit bacteria to people who are at an increased risk of infection, including young children.

It is anticipated that immunising Year 10 students will reduce transmission of the bacteria to others and help prevent infections within the larger community.

## Which vaccine will be used and how effective is it?

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine will be used. This vaccine protects against four serogroups of meningococcal bacteria: A, C, W and Y. The conjugate vaccine Menveo<sup>®</sup>, supplied by GlaxoSmithKline in Australia and Nimenrix<sup>®</sup>, supplied by Pfizer will be used for this school-based program.

These vaccines are safe and effective. Meningococcal ACWY vaccination programs have been implemented in adolescents aged 13–15 years in the UK since 2015 and adolescents aged 11–12 in the US since 2005 with no significant concerns reported. The vaccine is routinely offered as a single dose. Further doses are recommended for those at increased risk of this disease and those travelling where this disease is common. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of the meningococcal ACWY vaccines are between 80–85 per cent in adolescents.