



MENINGOCOCCAL B VACCINE

The meningococcal B vaccine is now **free** for adolescents aged 14 - 19 years.

Protecting your teenager against meningococcal B, a rare but serious bacterial disease.

The Northern Territory Government provides a free meningococcal B vaccination program, to protect those most at risk.

The meningococcal B vaccine is free for:

- Infants, aged **6 weeks to 2 years**
- Adolescents aged **14-19 years**

From 1 January 2027, the vaccine will only be free for infants aged 6 weeks to 12 months and adolescents in Year 9

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a rare but severe infection that occurs when meningococcal bacteria invades the body from the nose or throat through close prolonged contact. The disease can occur rapidly and may be difficult to diagnose early. The person carrying the bacteria is usually completely well.

Most people with meningococcal infection fully recover but some people can develop long-term health complications including limb deformity, skin scarring, deafness and brain damage. It is fatal in 5-10% of cases.

There are several different strains of meningococcal bacteria. The main strains that cause meningococcal disease are A, B, C, W and Y.

Is my teenager eligible for the free meningococcal B vaccine?

Teenagers are at an increased risk of invasive meningococcal disease due to:

- Large gatherings
- Kissing with multiple partners
- Crowded living and sleeping situations

Students in Year 9 will now receive the meningococcal B vaccine, in addition to the meningococcal ACWY vaccine which is provided as part of the National Immunisation Program. The vaccine is given as two doses at least 8 weeks apart.

Are there any side effects following the vaccine?

Common side effects following meningococcal B immunisation include:

- Fever
- Pain
- Redness, swelling or a nodule (small hard lump) at the injection site
- Sleepiness
- Headache and feeling unwell (more commonly reported among adolescents).
- If you are concerned about your child's reaction to the meningococcal B vaccine, please seek medical advice.

Where can my teenager go to be immunised?

The meningococcal B vaccine is provided to Year 9 to students through the NT School Immunisation Program. Students will receive two doses of the vaccine. A catch up vaccination program provides students in Years 10-12 with the free vaccine until 31 December 2026.

It is important that you return your vaccination consent form to your school.

The vaccine will also be available from GPs, pharmacies, community care centres and remote health services.

Does the vaccine offer any other benefits?

Yes. The meningococcal B vaccine has also shown effectiveness in preventing gonorrhoea amongst adolescents and young adults. This is because gonorrhoea and meningococcal B are caused by similar types of bacteria. For more information, visit the NT Health website.

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