

# Bexsero (Meningococcal B Vaccination)

## What is meningococcal disease?

This is a serious infection caused by a group of bacteria called meningococcal. It can infect the brain and spine, which we call 'meningitis' or cause a more general infection of the whole body, which we call 'meningococcal sepsis.'

There are 5 major strains of meningococcal bacteria; these are names A, B, C, W, and Y.

These bacteria can cause serious illness; if untreated, it can lead to organ failure, long term brain damage, loss of limbs, or death. Thankfully, the overall risk of infection is very low these days, thanks to vaccinations.

## I thought my child already received a meningococcal vaccination - what's the difference?

In NSW, all children receive a vaccination against 4 strains of meningococcal (ACWY), at the age of 12 months and again in Year 10 at school. This protects them against the majority of meningococcal infections.

Meningococcal B is not covered by our state government's vaccinations, but is included for some other states. This might change in the future but, for now, the vaccination against Meningococcal B is available but optional in NSW.

### **When is it given?**

A child's immune system reacts slightly differently to vaccines at different ages, so this depends on the age at which you decide to get the vaccination:

- If you start the schedule before their first birthday, your child will receive two doses spaced 8 weeks apart, then a third dose at age 12 months or later.
- If you start the schedule after their first birthday, your child will only require two doses spaced 8 weeks apart.

Both options are proven to be effective and safe, so the decision is individual for parents. The first 12 months of life can sometimes feel full of immunisations, so some parents are more comfortable 'spacing them out'. On the other hand, some families would prefer to 'get it out of the way' earlier, particularly if their child is attending daycare at an early age. There is no right or wrong answer; discuss it with your doctor.

### **How much does it cost?**

Roughly \$150 per vaccination dose. You will require a prescription from your GP to purchase it.

**If you have any questions about Meningococcal B or the Bexsero vaccine, please book an appointment with your doctor to discuss it in more detail.**

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