

# School and College Student Information

## Free Meningococcal W Vaccination Program

### Are you aged 15 to 19 years?

- Make sure you get your free meningococcal vaccine. It's only available until **30 April 2018**.

### What is meningococcal disease?

- Meningococcal disease is a rare but serious infection caused by bacteria carried in the nose and throat of some healthy people. It is spread through regular close contact. The disease can cause lifelong disability or death and can affect people at any age.

### Why should I get a vaccine?

- We have seen a big increase in meningococcal disease in Tasmania recently caused by one strain of the bacteria, known as meningococcal W.
- A one-dose vaccine against meningococcal strains A, C, W and Y is available for free to 15-19 year olds. The vaccine helps to protect against meningococcal W disease and three other strains of the bacteria.

### Why are only people aged 15-19 years being offered a vaccine?

- Older teenagers aged 15 to 19 years are more likely to carry the bacteria and spread it to others. By vaccinating your age group we aim to reduce the risk of meningococcal W disease for you and everyone else in Tasmania.

### How can I get my vaccine?

- If you are at school or college in year 10, 11 or 12 in 2018, you can get your vaccine at school in Term 1.
- You need to:
  1. Take home your consent pack.
  2. Get your parent or guardian to sign the form.
  3. Bring it back to school and hand it in.
- If you are 18 years old you can sign your own consent form. If you are 16 or 17 years old and in year 11 or 12, get your parent or guardian to sign the form. If this isn't possible you should be able to sign it yourself if you understand the benefits and risks of the vaccine. The immuniser will assess that you understand these before giving you the vaccination.
- Talk to your GP if you miss your vaccine at school or college.

### Is the vaccine safe?

- The vaccine is safe and works well. You might get a sore arm or get a mild fever or headache. Side effects are usually mild and don't last long.
- An ice pack might help a sore arm or you can take paracetamol if you have pain or a fever.

### What if I've already had a meningococcal vaccine?

- If you are in year 11 or 12 you may have received the meningococcal ACWY vaccine last year at school, your GP or a council clinic. **If you have already had the meningococcal ACWY vaccine you do not need another dose. Only one dose is needed.**
- Chances are you've had a meningococcal vaccine against the C strain as a child.
- If you've had the meningococcal C vaccine (NeisVac-C), or the meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero), you should still get the meningococcal ACWY vaccine. If you're unsure, talk to your parent/guardian or GP.

For further information please go to [www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/menw](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/menw)  
or call the Public Health Hotline – Tasmania on 1800 671 738