

23 May 2017

Dear Principal

**Re: 2017 Meningococcal ACWY Secondary School Vaccine Program**

In February 2017, the Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy, announced funding for a school-based vaccine program for meningococcal ACWY from term two until 31 December 2017.

Based on recommendations of national immunisation experts, adolescents in Years 10, 11 and 12 of secondary school, as well as those adolescents not in secondary school but of an equivalent age (15-19 years), will be eligible for the free meningococcal ACWY vaccine.

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria. Although uncommon, it can become life-threatening very quickly. There are different strains of meningococcal bacteria known by letters of the alphabet, including A, B, C, W and Y. In recent years the meningococcal W strain has increased across Australia, with Victoria experiencing 11 cases to date in 2017 and 48 cases in 2016, compared to 17 cases in 2015, four in 2014 and one in 2013. It is now the predominant strain in Victoria.

Schools are encouraged to support successful implementation of the Meningococcal ACWY Secondary School Vaccine Program by following three key steps:

1. Liaise with your local council immunisation coordinator to ensure Meningococcal ACWY consent cards have been distributed to parents/guardians of students in Years 10, 11 and 12.
2. Send a collection statement to parents/guardians that informs them their contact details will be transferred to local council unless they request otherwise.
3. Transfer student and parent/guardian contact details data to your local council.

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009* authorise secondary schools to provide their local council with student and parent/guardian contact information for any student scheduled to receive a vaccine. This information assists local councils to follow-up incomplete or missing consent cards. We would like to remind you of the importance of communicating this information with local council.

Please visit Immune Hero: [immunehero.health.vic.gov.au](http://immunehero.health.vic.gov.au) for further information to support the Meningococcal ACWY Secondary School Vaccine Program, including:

- FAQ factsheet for school staff and parents/guardians
- Collection statement to be issued to all parents/guardians of Year 10, 11 and 12 students
- Sample school newsletter article

Thank you for your continued support of the Secondary School Vaccine Program.

Yours sincerely,



**Prof Charles Guest**  
Chief Health Officer  
Department of Health & Human Services  
23 / 5 / 2017



**Dr Jenny Proimos**  
Principal Medical Advisor  
Department of Education & Training  
23 / 5 / 2017

