Meningitis C
Information

You may be aware of that there are various strains of meningococcal bacteria that cause a rare disease either by ‘blood poisoning’ (septicaemia) and/or ‘meningitis’ (infection of the membranes around the brain), both of which are potentially fatal. This is still a relatively rare infection but it does affect young people, especially those living in communal environments such as University Halls of Residence. The infection can be quickly fatal so is very serious for anyone who catches it. It is spread by close and prolonged contact – eg kissing, sneezing or coughing on someone and sharing eating/drinking utensils. The initial symptoms are difficult to distinguish from other infectious illnesses, eg, influenza. Almost 80% of cases will develop a rash that does not blanch (become pale/go white) when pressed on. This type of rash is often a late sign of infection.

Possible Symptoms Include
- Fever
- Drowsiness
- Headache
- Intense dislike to light
- Neck stiffness
- Malaise
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Muscle aches and pains
- Rash or spots

The Ministry of Health recommends Meningitis C vaccination for students living in Halls of Residence at University. You can have this vaccination at the Student Health Service or from your normal GP. Unfortunately, the vaccines available for Meningitis C aren’t funded by the government so there is a cost involved. Some individuals who are at risk of contracting meningococcal disease are funded to receive the vaccination.

Funded Vaccine
- Close contact of patients with proven meningococcal infection
- Control of outbreaks
- Individual post bone marrow transplant
- Functional or anatomical asplenia
- Following immunosuppression

Student Health Services are able to offer 3 choices of vaccine for Meningococcal disease

1. MENACTRA
This vaccine covers for a wide range of meningococcal groups (A, C, Y and W-135 conjugate). It gives 5-10 years’ protection
depending of a number of factors including, age at vaccination. The Immunisation Advisory Centre recommends a booster dose after 5 years for those still at risk. It costs $120 (approx.).

2. **NIMENRIX**
   
   This vaccine also covers the groups A, C, Y and W-135 conjugate. It gives up to 5 years’ protection. Those still at risk after 5 years should have a booster dose. It costs $110 (approx.).

3. **NEISVAC-C**
   
   This vaccine covers group C only. This is the most common form of the meningococcal infection in young people in New Zealand. However, those people living in the halls of residence do run the risk of coming into contact with people from overseas that may have been in contact with A, Y and W-135. It costs $60.00 (approx.).

We recommend that you consider vaccination. This is a different meningitis strain from the Meningitis B that was the focus of a vaccination programme a few years ago. The Meningitis B vaccine gives no protection against Meningitis C.

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