

News Release

8th March 2006

### Clarification of post-programme availability of MeNZB vaccine

The Meningococcal B Immunisation programme is set to finish on June 30<sup>th</sup> this year, but doctors are increasingly concerned that parents are receiving mixed messages about the availability of the vaccine after this date.

The Meningococcal B Immunisation programme was implemented as a mass rapid response campaign. While the programme finishes on June 30, the vaccine will still be available to some groups for a period of time.

CMDHB Director of Primary Care, Doctor Allan Moffitt says, after June 30 "the vaccine will be available to children under 5 until further notice. The vaccine will also be available to those aged 5 to 19 years until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, to allow this group to complete their second and third doses". Newborns will also be offered the MeNZB vaccine from this time, in conjunction with the routine standard baby vaccination schedule.

Although the vaccine will be available after the programme ends, Doctor Moffitt says parents should not delay their children's vaccinations. "Parents should aim for children to have all three doses completed before the end of the programme, especially those who are already overdue for a second or third dose - nationally there are about 50,000 children and young people in this category".

Everyone under 20 years of age should start or complete their doses now says Doctor Moffitt. "Winter is approaching fast and this is the time of year when Meningococcal disease increases. The sooner children are immunised, the sooner protection develops".

For babies aged under six months parents should have their children immunised along with other routine baby vaccinations. The Ministry of Health recommends the MeNZB vaccine doses be given at six weeks old, three months old (not less than 13 weeks of age) and five months old (not less than 21 weeks of age). Babies who are vaccinated before they are six months old should also complete a 4<sup>th</sup> dose to boost their protection. This should be given at 10 months old, or a minimum of four months after their 3<sup>rd</sup> dose.

[More]

To get your child's MeNZB vaccinations underway or up to date, see your regular doctor or nurse. You can also call 0800 454 375 to find your closest medical centre or immunisation nurse in the Counties Manukau region.

For more information about Meningococcal B and the MeNZB vaccine contact the Ministry of Health's free information line on 0800 20 30 90.

For media enquiries please call Lauren Young and Associates 09) 378 8433 or 027 243 9900.

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