



## **The Hon. Greg Hunt MP**

Minister for Health

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

2 February 2018

#### **Quad-strain meningococcal vaccine to be added to National Immunisation Program**

To help protect our youngest Australians from the devastating consequences of meningococcal, the Turnbull Government will add a quad-strain vaccine to the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

The new vaccine (Nimenrix) covers against A, C, W and Y strains (MenACWY) and will be added to the NIP ahead of the next peak meningococcal season which, based on previous years, is expected to be in the second half of the year.

Meningococcal is a rare but very serious infection that occurs when meningococcal bacteria from the throat or nose ‘invades’ the body. The consequences are devastating for individuals and for their families.

In recent years we have seen a rise in the number of invasive meningococcal cases in Australia. In 2017, there were 382 cases reported nationally, compared with 252 cases in 2016 and 182 cases in 2015.

Deaths associated with meningococcal have also risen, with 28 deaths in 2017, compared with 11 deaths in 2016 and 12 deaths in 2015.

Currently, infants aged 12 months are given a single-strain Meningococcal C vaccine.

Upgrading to the quad-strain is great news for parents and infants, but it’s only the first step in the Turnbull Government’s broader approach to reduce the impact of meningococcal.

In March 2018, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) will consider the listing of a MenACWY vaccine for adolescents.

We are committed to strengthening Australia’s world-class national vaccination program and we urge all Australian parents and carers to have their children vaccinated.

The announcement today follows the decision earlier this week by PBAC to recommend the listing of Nimenrix for infants aged 12 months of age.

Unlike Labor, the Coalition has a policy of funding all medicines recommended by PBAC.

This is part of our rock solid commitment to making medicines accessible, and because immunisation is critical to maintaining public health and preventing the outbreak of infectious diseases.

Vaccination works and is an effective and safe tool to prevent the spread of many diseases that cause hospitalisation, serious ongoing health conditions and sometimes death.

I encourage everyone to get the facts about immunisation by visiting <https://immunisationfacts.gov.au>

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