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MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 6 February 2017

MENINGOCOCCAL W PROTECTION FOR NSW TEENS

The NSW Government will fund a new school-based meningococcal vaccination program for all Year 11 and 12 students to combat the rise in the W strain of this potentially fatal disease, Minister for Health Brad Hazzard announced today.

“This week I made clear to senior health officials that the NSW Government would do whatever possible to protect our young people against Meningococcal W and other strains,” Mr Hazzard said.

“The NSW Government is now allocating \$9 million for this vaccination program in its first year, which will see 180,000 vulnerable teenagers in all high schools eligible to be vaccinated.”

The NSW Meningococcal W Response Program will target 17 and 18 year olds this year, as immunisation experts advise that this age group is particularly at risk because of their physical closeness with peers (e.g. kissing, coughing, sneezing).

Meningococcal W has become a prominent strain nationally and in NSW, with the state’s notifications almost tripling since 2015. Over the last 10 years, the W strain has had an eight per cent mortality rate compared with a four per cent rate for other strains.

The program will start in Term Two, and be expanded to cover other upper high school students in subsequent years.

If any Year 11 and 12 students miss out on the vaccine at school, they will be able to get the vaccine for free from their GP later in the year.

Under the program teenagers will receive a four-antigen vaccine, which provides protection against the A, C, W and Y strains.

The NSW Government takes the risks posed by meningococcal disease very seriously and will continue to monitor international responses and advice and work with the Commonwealth Government on the national response.

For more information go to

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/meningococcal-w.aspx> or call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

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