

PRESS RELEASE

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Vaccination against Meningitis ACWY

Last year, the Government introduced vaccination against Meningitis C for university entrants, following research findings that the protective effect of the routine vaccination received by infants could wane as the child grows, necessitating a booster dose in adolescent years.

Young persons who enter into higher education for the first time are at particular risk of meningitis, as they usually move into areas where people live closely to each other, such as university halls of residence and shared accommodation, where they are exposed to unfamiliar bacteria.

For these reasons, vaccination against meningitis is strongly desirable prior to university entry.

In addition, during the last six months, another variant of meningitis called Meningitis W has caused illness among a number of university students. There has never been any childhood immunisation against this variant.

The Government is therefore introducing a combined vaccine against four strains of meningitis (A, C, W and Y) in a single dose offered to all young people. To ensure that children are properly protected, well in advance, the vaccine is being introduced at even earlier ages, at secondary school level.

There will be three separate programmes as shown below:

UNIVERSITY ENTRANTS

All Gibraltar students who are about to leave for University enrolment for the first time are eligible. This includes those who may have previously received vaccination against only Meningitis C.



Eligible students may call in for immunisation at the Child Welfare and Immunisation Clinic without appointment at the Primary Care Centre, ICC building as follows:

DAILY 9 AM – 11 AM and 2 PM – 4 PM.

Priority will be given to those who are leaving imminently for university. Students with later joining dates are requested to use later dates.

Students who are unable to receive the immunisation before they leave can also get themselves immunised while abroad, but the providers may charge a fee for this service.

REGULAR PROGRAMME

All Gibraltar students will be offered the vaccine through their schools during the School Year 9. This is regular programme that will commence during 2015/16 and continue until further notice.

CATCHUP PROGRAMME

In order to ensure that older children do not lose out, all Year 13 students will also be offered the vaccine during 2015/16. This is a 'catch-up' programme that will last over the next four years, until all the children have caught up.

CAUTION

One cautionary note to remember is that the vaccine only protects against Meningococcal disease of the Types A, C, W and Y. It will not protect against the Type B, which can cause serious illnesses. Hence, even if vaccination has been taken, people should still be on the alert for the well-known symptoms of meningitis, although their risk should now be lower.

For more information, please contact the Child Welfare & Immunisation clinic in the Primary Care Centre on 20078039.