

Immunisations Underway in Schools

After months of planning, preparing resources, employing and training staff and organising systems, the Meningococcal B School-Based Immunisation Programme is finally underway.

The first school immunisations took place on 02 August. The students immunised were more overwhelmed by the media attention than the actual injection!

To date 34,000 children have been immunised.

Consent forms rushing in

The Kidz First Public Health Nursing Meningococcal B Teams (all 130 of them), would like to say a big **thank you** to all school staff for their help in facilitating an overwhelming response to the consenting process.

One of the biggest tasks associated with the school-based immunisation programme has been the consenting process as students cannot be immunised unless they have written consent from a parent/guardian.

The Nursing Teams have been really encouraged by the efficiency and speed with which schools responded to the challenge of getting students to take home and return the completed forms within a few days.

A number of schools have had a 100% return rate within a phenomenally short time frame.

This has made it much easier for the teams of Public Health Nurses to process

the forms and have them data-entered ready for the immunisation.

A big thank you goes out to everyone involved, including senior management, support staff and teachers.

Information for Parents

Some parents are delaying giving their consent for their child to be immunised, preferring to take a 'wait and see' approach. The Meningococcal B Team encourages parents to give their consent and allow their child to be immunised against meningococcal B disease. 30,000 immunised to date can't be wrong!

Some children have experienced unwanted side effects simply because they are not eating or drinking enough prior to being immunised. It's always important that students have breakfast if they are to learn but particularly important over the next few weeks/months while students are being given their three injections.

Some students are having a day off school following immunisation. Our experiences from the trials tell us that these numbers will drop following subsequent vaccinations. The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site.

The MeNZB vaccine does not work on the 'herd immunisation principle' as it offers individual protection. The 'herd' principle applies for vaccines such as measles, mumps and rubella.

It is important to reiterate that three injections are required in order for children to be fully protected from meningococcal B disease. If a child

misses their first injection the Nurse will put them into the second visit and so on. There will also be a catch up as part of a school-wide 'mop up'.

Any questions about meningococcal B disease and the MeNZB vaccine should be directed to the free Meningococcal B hotline on 0800 20 30 90.

Teacher Resource Pack

We are delighted with the success of the Meningococcal B Teacher Resource pack for primary and intermediate schools. Teachers who have used the pack have reported that students enjoyed the exercises and certainly learnt a good deal about Meningococcal B disease.

We are hoping that teachers will consider continuing to use the exercises for the second and third injections to remind students of the importance of completing all three immunisations in order to gain maximum protection against the disease.

A revision activity around the immunisation process on the day might also be useful for the younger primary grades.

School co-operation

The Kidz First Public Health Nursing Teams have been most appreciative of the co-operation and support they have received from school staff and students. The sheer numbers involved in the school-based programme make it a massive logistical exercise.

The School-Based programme is running smoothly thanks to everyone involved, including the students.

A special thank you to those principals and deputy principals overseeing proceedings as well as school property managers and librarians for their assistance in transforming school halls, libraries and other venues into vaccination sites.

In some schools the prefects and senior students have taken the lead in creating an atmosphere of calm pragmatism. "It's just a little shot - get over it", remarked one student as he staunchly rolled up his sleeve!

There have been lots of memorable stories. One primary school principal educated all seven classes in her school about meningococcal B disease and the immunisation process.

The next day a very amused mother commented to her that:

"... the Meningococcal police are alive and well in our house today!"

When asked by the puzzled principal to explain, the parent described how her 8-year-old daughter had refused to allow the usual kiss on the lips instead pointing to her a spot on her cheek while stating firmly:

"No Mum, not on the lips. Meningococcal B remember! You need to kiss me here instead"!

Further information

For further information about Meningococcal B Disease and the School-Based Immunisation Programme check out the following resources:

The Ministry of Health Website on www.moh.govt.nz

The free Meningococcal B hotline on 0800 20 30 90.

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