

**Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme Update – Issue 7, p 1****Number of doses delivered hits two million mark**

New Zealand's largest ever immunisation campaign has passed the two million doses milestone, with about 900,000 young New Zealanders having received the MeNZB™ vaccine. Minister of Health Annette King announced the milestone late last week.

"The two millionth dose is a significant milestone. A fantastic amount of work is being done by a huge team of people from across the health and education sectors.

"We should also be praising New Zealand families because to date more than 95 percent of school consent forms have been returned with about 90 per cent consenting to vaccinate. This in itself is an incredible achievement.

"Time-wise, we're about halfway through the mass immunisation programme so it is not too late to get started and to get all three vaccinations, which you need for protection."

Ms King says "In Counties-Manukau, where the vaccine has had the longest time to make an impact on rates of the disease, the early indications look promising. There were 62 cases per 100,000 population in 2003/4 and in 2004/5 it was 32 cases per 100,000."

While people who want to get their children immunised are being encouraged not to leave it too long, the Ministry of Health is emphasising the need for everyone who starts the programme to get all three doses. As is normal with many vaccines, young babies who begin the programme before they are six months old may also need a booster dose.

"But even if someone has been fully immunised, they need to stay vigilant for signs of meningococcal disease. No vaccine is 100 percent effective, the vaccine only offers protection against the epidemic strain of meningococcal disease and there are other serious illnesses with similar symptoms that we must be wary of."

**Update on the meningococcal epidemic**

- In 2005 there have been nine deaths, with 158 cases through to August 5.
  - Figures for 2004 show there were 342 cases and eight deaths.
  - The pre-epidemic rate of disease was about 50 to 60 cases.
- The epidemic strain of the disease accounts for about 75 per cent of cases.
- The rate of disease remains well above levels justifying an immunisation programme.

**National numbers in a nutshell**

- Two million doses administered
  - 900,000 people have had at least one dose
  - More than 310,000 people have had all three doses
- About 3,000 doses a day are being given in primary care
  - About 20,000 doses a day are being given in schools

**For more information about meningococcal disease and the immunisation programme:**

**Ministry of Health - [www.immunise.moh.govt.nz](http://www.immunise.moh.govt.nz) OR Freephone 0800 20 30 90**  
**Immunisation Advisory Centre - [www.immune.org.nz](http://www.immune.org.nz) OR Freephone 0800 IMMUNE (4 6 6 8 6 3)**

**Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme Update – Issue 7, p 2****Programme progressing well in Waitemata**

More than 150,000 doses of MeNZB™ vaccine have now been given to North Shore, Rodney and Waitakere students during Waitemata's school-based Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme.

Vaccination of children aged from five to 17 years started in March with the aim of helping protect against New Zealand's epidemic B strain of meningococcal disease. Regional Project Manager Craig Murray says the campaign has progressed extremely well since then and will start winding down in schools at the end of this month.

"We have now delivered dose one to every single child whose parents consented to vaccination and are steadily completing doses two and three," he says

Around 89,000 Waitemata students were eligible for vaccination when the programme started and, of the 92% of consent forms returned, 85% gave permission to vaccinate. Mr Murray says **additional catch-up clinics are now being planned for across the district in the coming weeks.**

"The clinics will be advertised and will provide the opportunity for children who have missed one of their three doses to catch up and benefit fully from the vaccinations," he says.

Immunisation of Waitemata's pre-school aged children is also progressing well with 78% of under-fives having received their first dose of MeNZB™ and 72%, their second. Waitemata District Health Board Senior Analyst, Sandy Latimer, says it is also pleasing to see that a number of first doses are still being given.

"This is likely to be a combination of small babies getting to six weeks of age and becoming eligible for MeNZB™, and families who have now decided to start their child on the course," she says.

Devonport resident Dr Marguerite Dalton is a paediatrician who acts as a Medical Advisor to the Immunisation Advisory Centre and is president of her local Plunket Volunteer Committee.

Involved with the Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme since it started in South Auckland, Dr Dalton says she too is aware of many families choosing to take up the MeNZB™ vaccine.

"I have been talking to a lot of mothers while doing local voluntary work for Plunket and am pleased to hear they are all getting their little ones vaccinated - it's great to know that the most vulnerable children in the community are getting vital protection when they need it," she says.

**The Meningococcal B Immunisation Programme is due to end on 30 June 2006, with the last date for a first dose being 1 March 2006.** Preschoolers and young people aged under 20 who have left school will be able to visit their local nurse or doctor up until that time to receive the first of the three doses needed. Each of the doses is given at about six week intervals.

Once Waitemata's catch-up clinics finish at the end of September, students who have still missed a dose will be linked back to their local GP clinic to complete the course.

