

IMPORTANT MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE UPDATE



Note: This bulletin is for information purposes ONLY. We do not advocate for or against any medical procedure. Some vaccines may work, some may not. Some evidence has recently come to light that parents and caregivers may wish to consider with respect to the MeNZB vaccine. With any medical procedure, it is important that you **INFORM** yourself thoroughly before you **CONSENT** to any treatment for yourself and your family.

NZ law requires that all treatment options and their possible side effects must be explained to patients. This includes vaccines. Ask your doctor or other health professional to tell you **all the options** that are available for yourself or your family. Visit some of the web sites listed at the end of this information sheet and make an **INFORMED DECISION**. The health and well-being of your child may depend on it.

• Does the vaccine actually work as advertised?

While there may be some benefits from the vaccine, it's difficult to know for sure. The manufacturer's own data sheet says that "no prospective efficacy trials have been performed with MeNZB". The Ministry of Health says that the vaccination programme is proceeding ... "without efficacy data."

In other words, there is no proof that the vaccine will in fact prevent meningococcal disease.

"The Norwegian 'parent vaccine' was tested only on secondary school teenagers – not on young children, toddlers and infants to whom the MeNZB is being given – and was never used in a national vaccination programme."

• Is the MeNZB vaccine safe?

This is also difficult to establish. There are many risks that may be as yet unknown. The MeNZB is a new vaccine with a very limited trial period and limited trial numbers of individuals who participated (about 1600). Moreover, these people were followed up for only "up to seven days" to monitor "adverse events". However, some of the more serious "adverse events" that may happen with vaccines may not show up for many years. Some vaccines that are still being promoted as "safe and effective" are now believed by many researchers to cause some kinds of cancer, insulin dependent diabetes and autism.

• Adverse reactions/effectiveness

Most vaccines have some adverse reactions, which can range in severity from trivial to life-threatening. The adverse reactions reported to date following the MeNZB vaccine are relatively minor – such as soreness at the injection site, low grade fever and mood changes. However, with every vaccine there is the potential for serious long term side effects. The Norwegian meningococcal B vaccine, on which the NZ vaccine is based, caused a number of serious side effects, including allergic shock, blood in the urine as well as some long term health problems such as Guillain-Barre Syndrome (a neurological disorder that can include paralysis) and ME (Chronic Fatigue syndrome). While it is not yet known whether the MeNZB vaccine could cause these

conditions, the fact that they have been associated with a very similar vaccine is cause for concern. Many of these problems will only become apparent after long-term follow up of vaccine recipients.

- Professor Dianna Lennon of Auckland University, principal researcher on the vaccine, has revealed that it is not even known whether the increase in antibodies occurring in people who have been inoculated (about 25% have no antibody response), is sufficient to provide protection against the disease. (Moreover, it is not yet known how long the elevated levels of antibodies will last.)

- The full extent of the safety and effectiveness of MeNZB will only be known after the vaccination campaign is finished – if the data gathered is released by the MoH.

In the meantime, the NZ vaccination programme must be considered "experimental."

• The Norwegian "Parent Vaccine"

The MoH has tried to allay concerns over the MeNZB vaccine by referring to the extensive trials conducted in Norway on the Norwegian "parent vaccine" (similar to the MeNZB), which was tested on 180,000 adolescents.

However, what the MoH seldom tells the public is that outside of the trials,

the Norwegian vaccine was never even used, after researchers concluded that it wasn't effective enough to justify a national campaign. According to *The Lancet* "the calculated rate of protection (57.2%)" was not high enough to justify a full-scale programme. According to the NZ MoH Immunisation Handbook(2002) the epidemic was naturally declining in Norway anyhow, without a full scale vaccination campaign. Furthermore, the Norwegian tests never involved participants younger than 14, while the MoH is hoping to vaccinate all young New Zealanders from 20 years down to 6 month old babies!

Does Meningococcal B 'cause' the disease?

- The Ministry of Health acknowledges the meningococcal bacterium lives harmlessly in the throats and nasal passages of up to 45% of all New Zealanders. Since it is not contagious, why do some people fall ill to the "disease" while the vast majority do not?

A depleted and overtaxed immune system is the most likely answer. Indeed, in 2000, Minister of Health Annette King, said that this disease was a "disease of poverty". In NZ as elsewhere people living in poverty often have poor nutrition. Specifically, deficiencies in vitamin C and iron have been found to increase the risk of children developing meningococcal disease. Regardless of family income, some children and teenagers may also have exposure to excessive amounts of sugar, food additives and other tox-

ins (such as cigarette smoke), which may also deplete the immune system.

• Is there really an "epidemic" of the disease in New Zealand?

It all depends on what you mean by the term "epidemic". In the last 10 years 70,000 people have died from cancer. 60,000 have died from heart disease and 15,000 people have died from "preventable medical injury". In that time 150 people have died from meningococcal B disease.

In any event, the number of deaths has decreased in the last three years by 75% and the number of cases has declined by 50%. REMEMBER: This is prior to the introduction of the vaccine. The reasons for this decline have not been explained by the MoH.

• More facts about the MeNZB vaccine

• SECRET INGREDIENTS: Many of the ingredients in the vaccine are considered to be "proprietary". In other words, neither the Ministry of Health nor the manufacturer will disclose everything that's in the vaccine. Medsafe, the Ministry of Health agency which licenses pharmaceutical medicines and vaccines, has refused to state what medium was used to culture the bacteria used in the MeNZB vaccine, what agents were used to deactivate the bacteria, and what agents were used to purify the vaccine.

• The MoH admits that the vaccine contains aluminium hydroxide, a proven neurotoxin (nerve poison), and that there is NO SAFETY DATA on its use with other vaccines.

QUESTION: Can you give an "informed consent" to a vaccine – without knowing what's in it?

The MoH has likewise refused to give information about the selection process for participants in the vaccine trial, or whether (or why) any withdrew from the vaccine trial – and if they did withdraw, whether they have been followed up. (Many trials can be and have been manipulated by the participant selection process and by removing mention of those who withdraw.)

• Don't scientists believe that vaccines are good?

Science and medicine are by no means unanimous about vaccines. In fact, there is a long-running controversy about both the safety as well as the effectiveness of many vaccines. Many doctors and scientists think that vaccines are generally safe and effective. However, many other doctors and scientists disagree. The safety and effectiveness of the NZ Meningococcal B vaccine are also now a matter of contention among doctors and health professionals.

• For more information about meningococcal disease, the MeNZB and other vaccines:

- Immunisation Awareness Society: <http://www.ias.co.nz>
- Red Flags Weekly: <http://redflagsweekly.com>
- ALSO: <http://www.nccn.net/~wwwithin/vaccine.htm>
- <http://vaccinationnews.com>

Special 24 page Vaccine Issue of **What Your Doctor Will Never Tell You**: Only \$5 (prepaid) to The Full Court Press, PO Box 44-128, Ak

Remember: Vaccines in New Zealand are NOT compulsory – either for school or kindy, or anywhere else. It is your RIGHT to refuse any medical procedure you do not want.

Free public meeting on the MeNZB vaccine:

Oct 28 (Thursday), organised by the Vaccination Alternatives Society to help inform parents about the MeNZB.

Speakers: The Hon Sue Kedgley MP, Jason Sanders, Jonathan Eisen, Kerry Morris. Q/A session.

WHERE: Trades Union Hall, 147 Great North Rd (nr Sussex St, Grey Lynn, Ak. (7pm sharp to 10 pm)

This document has been prepared as a public health service by researchers and health professionals in association with the Vaccination Alternatives Society of New Zealand. Info line: (08) 324 9178 (toll-free in Ak). Readers are urged to make photocopies of this document and disseminate it as widely as possible.

Parent/Caregiver Refusal to Consent Form

I have read the information contained in this bulletin stating that the MeNZB vaccine has been inadequately tested and that there is insufficient evidence to show that it will protect my child against meningococcal disease. Also: that there may be a chance that the vaccine may cause my child to develop serious, long term health problems. I therefore DO NOT consent to my child being given the MeNZB vaccine since I understand that at this stage no doctor or any other health professional can in fact guarantee its safety or efficacy.

(Signed and dated)

NOTE: If your doctor disagrees with this, ask him/her to sign the PERSONAL GUARANTEE OF SAFETY below.

Vaccinator's Personal Guarantee:

As required under the Health and Disabilities Act, I have discussed ALL THE OPTIONS associated with Meningococcal Disease and its prevention, with the person whose signature appears above. I personally guarantee that this vaccine is both completely safe and effective, and will not cause any serious side effects ("adverse events") that will harm the child in any way.

(Signed and dated)

Print name here _____

Adverse Reaction Report Form:

If you believe that your child has suffered an adverse reaction from this (or any other) vaccine you should contact the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring. Freepost 112002, P.O. Box 913, Dunedin. Tel: (03) 479-7247. Please get in touch with the Vaccination Alternatives Society for more information on reporting.

Please send me () copies of this Bulletin so that I can distribute them in my community. Cost is \$20 per hundred copies (includes postage). I enclose \$_____ Send to Vaccination Alternatives Society. PO Box 56066, Dominion Rd, Ak

Name

Address

City/Town

Tel.....Email

