

## **New Vaccines**

### **Recommendations from The Immunisation Service**

### **Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne**

Dear Parent,

Many parents are scared that their child might get meningitis or some other serious infection. The best way to protect your child against these illnesses is by immunisation.

We thought you might like to know about some new vaccines that you might want your child to have. There are 3 vaccines that have become available in Australia over the last few years. They have all been used a lot overseas. They are all safe and effective.

In 2003, the government started to fund the meningococcal C vaccine. Meningococcal C vaccine is now part of the routine schedule for all babies at 1 year of age.

The conjugate pneumococcal vaccine and the varicella (chicken pox) vaccine are relatively new vaccines that you may want your child to have on top of the normal schedule of immunisations that all children should have.

The government has been recommended to include the new pneumococcal vaccine and the varicella vaccine in the routine funded schedule for all young children. It is recommended that children receive the new pneumococcal vaccine at 2, 4 and 6 months of age, and the varicella vaccine for all infants at 18 months of age. The government is currently providing free vaccine for children who are at an increased risk of pneumococcal disease.

Ask your local doctor or maternal child health nurse or call as at the Royal Children's Hospital Immunisation service if you have any further questions.

#### **Meningococcal Group C Vaccine (Meningitec®, Neis Vac-C®, Menjugate®)**

**Cost at RCH Pharmacy \$65.00**

Meningococcus is often in the news because it sometimes causes several people in a community to get sick and it can kill people quickly. It causes septicaemia (blood infections), and meningitis. It can affect people of any age especially young children and teenagers.

There are several types of meningococcus but not all can be prevented by immunisation.

This new vaccine prevents about half of the cases. The immunity lasts for a long time when the vaccine is given to young children.

The vaccine costs about \$70 per dose, and young infants may need up to three doses.

This vaccine is now provided free as part of the routine immunisation schedule from 12 months of age. The vaccine is effective in babies less than one year, but at present parents have to pay for it if they wish their baby to be protected.

## **Pneumococcal Vaccine (Prevenar®)**

**Cost at RCH Pharmacy \$110.00**

The pneumococcus germ (pronounced "new-mo-kok-us") is one of the causes of ear infections and pneumonia in children. It can also cause life-threatening blood infections and meningitis. Children under 2 years of age are at highest risk.

The new vaccine protects against most types of this germ that cause nasty disease in children. It helps protect children against meningitis and septicaemia (blood infections). It also helps to protect against pneumonia (chest infections) and against ear infections a little. It is a very good vaccine for children under 2 years of age.

The vaccine is expensive and up to 3 doses are needed in babies. It is possible that it may be partially paid for by private health insurance if you have "extras" cover. Aboriginal children and some children with certain medical conditions may be entitled to free vaccine. Ask your doctor or us about this.

## **Chicken Pox Vaccine (Varilrix®, Varivax II®)**

**Cost at RCH Pharmacy \$50.00**

The chicken pox vaccine has been available overseas for a number of years, and is now in Australia.

Most of us have had chicken pox, and remember it as an unpleasant, but not serious illness.

However in Australia it causes over 1200 people to be hospitalised, and at least 4 deaths each year.

It is usually a major inconvenience for a family when a child has chicken pox because they can't attend school or kinder and often a parent will have to take up to 2 weeks off work. Shingles is a very unpleasant complication of childhood chicken pox that some people will get in later life.

The vaccine can be given to anyone over 12 months old. Most children will need one dose (two if they are over 14 years old). If your child has had chicken pox they do not need the vaccine.

If someone in your family has a problem with their immunity (for example because they have cancer, or take drugs which affect immunity), then it is very important for all the other family members who have not had chicken pox to be immunised.

The vaccine costs about \$60 per dose. At present the government does not fund this vaccine. It is possible that it may be partially paid for by private health insurance if you have "extras" cover.

**Further advice and immunisation for any child attending The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne**



**03 9345 6599**