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## Meningococcal Meningitis Information Sheets

### *What is Meningococcal Meningitis?*

Meningococcal Meningitis is a bacterial disease that is transmitted person to person, via respiratory droplets of infected persons or carriers. For example a cough or a sneeze from an infected person is able to transmit the disease to other people within the vicinity. 2-10% of healthy persons are nasopharyngeal carriers of the disease – without even knowing it.

### *How many kinds of meningococcal meningitis are there?*

Each of the countries where the disease is endemic has particular strains of the meningococcal disease. In Australia there are vaccines that are used to vaccinated against the following strains; A, C, W135, and Y.

### *Can you die from Meningococcal Meningitis?*

Meningococcal meningitis has a case fatality rate of 5-10%, even if prompt medical treatment is administered. WHO states that Meningococcal septicaemia is a less common form of meningococcal disease, characterised by circulatory collapse, haemorrhagic skin rash and a high case fatality rate. The symptoms associated with meningococcal meningitis include; sudden onset of headache, fever, nausea and/or vomiting and neck stiffness.

### *Is the risk of getting meningococcal meningitis higher at some times rather than others?*

At times there are epidemics of meningococcal meningitis, however this is usually due to a collection of risk factors all present at the one time. In temperate zones cases tend to occur in the winter months. Outbreaks can occur in crowded spaces. In Sub-Saharan Africa, outbreaks usually occur in the dry season. It is strongly recommended that pilgrims to the Hajj be vaccinated prior to travel to avoid outbreaks.

### *Can I be vaccinated against meningococcal meningitis?*

Yes. Australia has two vaccines that are able to provide immunity to travellers to areas with meningococcal meningitis. Both these vaccines are able to vaccinate against the strains A, C, W135 and Y.

### *How much does the vaccination cost?*

The vaccination costs \$50.00 (incl GST). The immunity period is 3 years.

### *Who can have the vaccination?*

Persons over the age of 2 years can have the vaccination.