



Public Health
England



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For distribution, in England, to:

University Heads of Institutions
University Health and Welfare teams
University Employed Nursing Teams
New Student Registration Teams
Academic Registrars Council (ARC)
Association of Heads of University Administration (AHUA)
Association of Managers of Student Services in UK Higher Education (AMOSSHE)

Dear Colleague,

New MenACWY vaccination for first-time university entrants

We are writing to seek your support in raising awareness that all new university entrants should be vaccinated with Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccine before the beginning of the new academic term in 2015. This vaccination programme replaces the previous MenC 'freshers' programme.

As you may already be aware, this vaccine is being introduced for all teenagers in school year 13 in the 2014/15 academic year (*date of birth 01.09.1996 to 31.08.1997*) in England from August this year, to respond to a rapid and accelerating increase in cases of a highly aggressive form of meningococcal group W (MenW) disease. In addition, the vaccine is also available to new university entrants, including international students, if they are a first year entrant and up to 25 years of age.

MenW cases have been increasing year-on-year since 2009, with 23 cases confirmed in 2009 and 119 confirmed in 2014, and the increase is now accelerating further into 2015 (see annex 1). Provisional figures show that since 1 July 2014, there have been more than 150 cases in England to the end of April 2015, compared to 80 cases in the same period of 2013/2014.

Cases are currently being confirmed across all age groups, including new university entrants, who are at particular risk of getting the disease as they are likely to be mixing closely with lots of new people, some of whom may unknowingly carry the meningococcal bacteria.

Meningococcal disease can cause meningitis (inflammation of the brain) and septicemia (blood poisoning) that can kill in hours, and those who recover may be left severely disabled.

The MenACWY conjugate vaccine will provide direct protection to those immunised, and by reducing MenW carriage, will also provide indirect protection to unvaccinated children and adults. The vaccine also protects against MenC.

From August 2015, all adolescents of school year 13 age will be invited for the MenACWY vaccine by their GP practice. However, with such a short timeframe before the start of the new academic term, we know that it is likely that some students will begin university without being immunised. The vaccine should continue to be offered at every opportunity during the academic year and students remain eligible up to 25 years of age.

Continues...

We therefore ask you to explore all possible routes to encourage all prospective first time entrants to your university to:

1. Take up the offer of the vaccination when offered by their GP from August 2015, before starting university;

And from the beginning of the new academic term:

2. Register with a new GP (for new entrants who have moved away from their previous area of residence);
3. Request the MenACWY vaccination from their new GP if they did not receive the vaccine before starting university.

Public information resources targeting eligible teenagers and their students are available [here](#) and can also be ordered in hard copy from the DH/ PHE Publications [Orderline](#). Universities are encouraged to distribute these leaflets widely with any correspondence to first-time university entrants. Further information on the programme can be found on [NHS Choices](#) and universities are also asked to support Public Health England's social media campaign - @PHE_UK on Twitter and 'Public Health England' on Facebook.

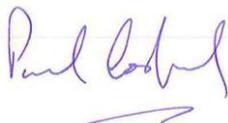
As part of the same programme, from January 2016, there will be a catch-up campaign for current school year 10 students through schools, and a further element of the catch-up campaign to cover the current school years 11 and 12 when these students reach year 13 will be confirmed in due course. The MenACWY vaccine will also be added to the routine adolescent schools programme (school year 9 or 10) from Autumn 2015, as a direct replacement for the MenC vaccination.

Thank you in anticipation of your support for this important immunisation programme which will prevent severe illness, death and disability, in our student populations.

Yours faithfully,



John de Pury
Assistant Director of
Policy [Head of Health]
Universities UK



Professor Paul Cosford
Medical Director and
Director for Health Protection
PHE



Ros Roughton
Director of Commissioning
NHS England

A letter sent to healthcare professionals confirming further details of the programme can be found [here](#).

[Annex 1:](#)

