Meningococcal vaccines for Australians: Information for providers

The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) has an updated meningococcal fact sheet that summarises the meningococcal vaccines available for use in Australia. Bexsero (MenBV) and Menveo (4vMenCV) are currently in short supply nationally. These shortages are expected to be resolved in June. You can subscribe to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) medicine shortages email list for regular alerts about medicine shortages.

Read the factsheet at goo.gl/F3VuHE

Subscribe to the TGA medicine shortages list at apps.tga.gov.au/prod/MSI/search/

Ross River virus on Bruny Island

As an update to the information in the April issue of General Practice Matters, surveillance data shows that some Ross River virus infections this year were acquired on Bruny Island, which has not previously been reported. Please consider Ross River virus as a possibility for people with suggestive symptoms who spent time on Bruny Island in the few weeks before their symptoms started.

For more information visit goo.gl/xPY0HH

Reporting vaccine adverse events

An adverse event is any unfavourable and unintended symptom, disease or sign (for example, an abnormal laboratory finding) associated with the use of the medicine or vaccine. The medicine or vaccine does not necessarily have to have caused the adverse event. Reporting an adverse event is important as it provides a better understanding of the safety issues around vaccines. The ongoing reporting of adverse events following immunisation allows the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to monitor rates and trends across Australia and assist in identifying issues such as incorrect vaccine administration, manufacture, storage and delivery.

Please report adverse events directly to the TGA on 1800 044 114. For more information visit www.tga.gov.au/reporting-adverse-events

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Click on the links above to go directly to the sections.
Influenza vaccine safety confirmed

AusVaxSafety, run by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS), is a national sentinel surveillance system that monitors the safety of influenza vaccines.

Immunisation is the best defense against influenza illness and complications, but concerns about influenza vaccine safety can be a barrier to uptake. A recent poll of Australian parents found that 88% are unsure about the safety of the flu vaccine in children.

New data released by the NCIRS shows the 2017 influenza vaccines is safe, with no significant, unexpected, or unusual reactions experienced by the 40,000 adults and children who have participated in the program.

Fewer than 10% of children aged 6 months to 5 years reported any adverse event. Injection site reactions were reported in 4.4% and fever in 2.2%. Similar rates were found in older children and adults.

Full results are available at www.ausvaxsafety.org.au and will be updated regularly throughout the influenza vaccination period.

Influenza preparedness in residential aged care

Residential aged care facilities are very susceptible to outbreaks of influenza.

Tasmania’s Acting Director of Public Health has recently written to directors of aged care facilities to recommend they review or develop their flu outbreak management plans.

GPs can assist this process in a number of ways:

- provide influenza and pneumococcal vaccination for recommended people
- consider the use of antiviral medication for treatment (or post-exposure prophylaxis in outbreak management). Having a standing order for patients helps get medication started sooner, which makes it more effective
- test people who are ill if an outbreak is suspected. This involves a nose and throat swab to collect a sample to test for viral respiratory pathogens (including influenza) by a nucleic acid test
- contact your pathology department to request a small supply of influenza testing kits to enable early testing.

For more advice please refer to the Guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of Influenza Outbreaks in Residential Care Facilities in Australia at goo.gl/uGzNlW or contact the DHHS Communicable Diseases Prevention Unit on 1800 671 738.

Influenza vaccine recommended in children

A recent study published in the journal Pediatrics demonstrated for the first time that flu vaccines help prevent deaths in children who are at high-risk for flu complications, and children with an average risk with lab-confirmed influenza infection.

The results come from data collected over four years by researchers at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and can be accessed at goo.gl/As5WnQ

Of all vaccine preventable diseases, influenza is the leading cause of hospitalisation among Australian children under five years of age. Nearly 1,500 children are admitted to hospital for confirmed flu each year and healthy children under five are most likely to be hospitalised for complications of flu.

Children can die from neurological and other complications of flu. A study conducted between 1997 and 2013 in paediatric ICUs in Australia and New Zealand found that half of the children who died during a flu-related admission did not have any underlying risk factors.

Children are more likely to catch the flu than adults and they contribute greatly to spreading the disease in the community.

A strong recommendation from a healthcare provider and annual check-ups result in more vaccine uptake among children. For more information on vaccine uptake in children visit goo.gl/RfLkTc

January to April 2017 fluTAS summary

The fluTAS Report is a regular flu season update to inform healthcare providers and the public about the current level of flu disease activity in Tasmania. So far for 2017:

- the 2017 influenza season has not begun
- although inter-seasonal influenza notification numbers were greater than the five-year average for the same period, flu activity is still well below winter influenza levels.

The full report can be found at goo.gl/kKfglU
Service commissioning update from Primary Health Tasmania

Mental health – people with mild mental illness
A tender for the delivery of services for people with, or at risk of, mild to moderate mental illness closed on 2 May. Evaluations of submissions are almost complete, and services are expected to commence as soon as possible before 1 July.

Aboriginal mental health
A number of Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations have co-designed mental health and social and emotional wellbeing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with Primary Health Tasmania. Services will be funded until June 2018, with further contracts subject on ongoing Australian Government funding and proof that program objectives are being met. Details of the new services will be available shortly.

Upcoming commissioning activity
We expect to approach the market in the third quarter of 2017 for the delivery of refugee health services, with the commissioned services to be in place by the end of the year. Current contracts with providers of suicide prevention services and services for people with severe and complex mental illness have been extended to 30 June 2018. This will enable comprehensive needs assessment and stakeholder consultation ahead of a tender process, with new services to be funded from July 2018.

More information about Primary Health Tasmania’s commissioning activity is available on our website at www.primaryhealthtas.com.au/commissioning

General practice involvement
General practices are encouraged to consider taking part in current and upcoming tenders. This could be as part of a consortium – you could contact other service providers in your area to explore options for working together to deliver services designed specifically for your community’s needs.

Register on Primary Health Tasmania’s eTender portal at www.tenderlink.com/primaryhealthtas to receive tender notifications.

Primary Health Tasmania welcomes ongoing general practice input on issues, needs and priorities relating to Aboriginal health, rural health, mental health, refugee health, and alcohol and other drug services.

Please email info@primaryhealthtas.com.au or call 1300 653 169.

Health Care Homes update
The list of the 200 selected Health Care Homes practices is available online at goo.gl/Fpe1bf
Health Care Home services will have a phased start later this year – 20 practices will begin on 1 October, and 180 will begin on 1 December. It is not yet known which practices will start in October.

In other updates:
• Precedence Healthcare has won the tender to develop and implement the risk stratification tool for Health Care Homes patients. Precedence Healthcare will work alongside the CSIRO in this project. More information on patient eligibility based on risk is available at goo.gl/eMf8Pj
• Shared care planning is a key component of the Health Care Home model. A new minimum requirements of shared care fact sheet is available at goo.gl/eMf8Pj. Shared care is designed to get patients more involved in their own care and improve the coordination of services patients receive inside and outside the Health Care Home.
• You can join the email list to receive regular eNewsletters about Health Care Homes by clicking on the subscribe button at www.health.gov.au/healthcarehomes

More information is available at www.health.gov.au/healthcarehomes
Cervical cancer screening

The Department of Health has provided an update about the interim arrangements for the National Cervical Screening Program.

The renewed National Cervical Screening Program will take effect on 1 December.

• Until 1 December, all women aged between 18 and 69 who have ever been sexually active should continue to have a Pap test when they are due according to their two-yearly schedule.

• Regular screening remains the best way to prevent cervical cancer, and women should not delay screening in anticipation of the new cervical screening test. There have been reductions in the numbers of women having their two-yearly Pap smears since the beginning of 2017.

• If a woman visits for a Pap test prior to 1 December and is under 25 years of age, a Pap test should be performed as usual.

• State and territory registers will continue to send reminder letters to eligible women as per the current process. Healthcare providers are also encouraged to send reminder letters to their patients as per their current process.

• The delay has created some additional pressures on pathology services, so turnaround times for results may be lengthened. However, this is still clinically safe for women.

For more information visit the DHHS Cervical Cancer Prevention Program website at goo.gl/XK7IfY or the Australian Government National Cervical Cancer Screening Program website at goo.gl/FHO8cD

June is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month

June is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month. Most bowel cancers are diagnosed in the latest stages. By encouraging patients to screen, up to 90% of bowel cancers can be diagnosed early at stage one and cured.

It is important that patients complete the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program test when they receive the kit in the mail. Currently, only 37% of Tasmanian participants return their screening kit when it is sent to them.

For more information on bowel cancer screening visit goo.gl/kLcsh2

New name for TasCarepoint

On 30 June, the statewide referral service known as TasCarepoint will be renamed Tasmanian Community Care Referral Service.

TasCarepoint is the statewide access point for:

• the Tasmanian Home and Community Care (HACC) program
• community nursing services delivered by the Tasmanian Health Service.

The Tasmanian Community Care Referral Service will otherwise continue to operate as usual.

An updated referral form will be available on the Primary Health Tasmania website in MD and BP versions. The Tasmanian HealthPathways website will also be updated to reflect the changes.

General practices are encouraged to prepare for implementation of these changes by communicating this information to multidisciplinary teams and by updating their contact lists, web links and other resources in the lead-up to 30 June.

For more information contact Linda Proietti Wilson on 6777 2985 or at linda.proietti@dhhs.tas.gov.au

HPV register

Recent data from the HPV register indicates an increase in GPs uploading HPV doses to the register from 25% in 2015 to 42% in 2016.

The HPV register plays an essential role in monitoring and evaluating the vaccine program.

Thanks to all GPs who have been supporting this initiative.

For more information about the HPV register visit www.hpvregister.org.au
Seeking participants for a gout study

The University of New South Wales in collaboration with St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, is conducting a study to understand the cost of chronic gout in households across Australia.

The team is recruiting gout patients to complete a short online survey about out-of-pocket expenses and use of health services.

Patients can visit [www.costofgout.com](http://www.costofgout.com) for more information or to complete the survey.

For more information contact Nicholas Nathan on (02) 8382 2199 or at n.nathan@student.unsw.edu.au

Seeking GPs for chronic lower back pain resource testing

The University of Notre Dame Australia, the Black Swan Health and the GPHQ platform are seeking GPs to take part in the PainChecker chronic lower back pain study.

The study aims to develop a practical checklist-based computer application, PainChecker, to assist GPs with managing chronic lower back pain and as a template for developing GP management plans for lower back pain.

GP participation involves using PainChecker for up to 60 days to manage new or current patients with chronic lower back pain and, if desired, to draft GP management plans. GPs are then asked to complete a 10-minute online survey about the application’s features and usefulness.

GPs may be eligible for CPD points for participation, and will be able to use the application free for a further 12 months.

If PainChecker proves useful, the research team will explore applications for other pain conditions such as neck pain and whiplash, headaches, neuropathic pain, joint pain and fibromyalgia.

For more information or to express interest in participating, contact the research team at admin@paincheckersystems.com.au

Breastfeeding education classes now in Tasmania

The Australian Breastfeeding Association is now offering breastfeeding education classes in Tasmania delivered by qualified counsellors and community education volunteers as part of the national education program.

Classes are designed for pregnant women and partners between weeks 13 – 24, however those who are further along or who are not meeting their breastfeeding goals are also welcome.

Support is also available to women to wean safely. Classes will be delivered in Ulverstone in the first instance, and then intermittently throughout the state.

For more information visit [www.breastfeeding.asn.au/classes](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/classes) or contact Marion Bowen on 6425 5780 or at mrbowen@hotkey.net.au

Men’s Health Week

Men’s Health Week is from 12 – 18 June.

Andrology Australia is offering free patient resources and materials to display in the workplace to promote the week.

Resources provide men with the opportunity to recognise the importance of their health and to encourage them to visit their GP for any health concerns.

For more information or to download resources, visit [www.andrologyaustralia.org/mens-health-week](http://www.andrologyaustralia.org/mens-health-week)
Immunisation update

Ulverstone
15 June 6:30pm – 9:30pm

Launceston
20 June 6:30pm – 9:30pm

Hobart
22 June 6:30pm – 9:30pm

Primary Health Tasmania invites GPs, nurses and immunisers to an immunisation update session presented by Dr Leanne Jones, GP – Director of the Immunisation Coalition and Kerry Nettle, RN – Communicable Diseases Prevention Unit (DHHS).

The session will address:
• the types of meningococcal vaccines, and when it is appropriate to vaccinate
• the zoster vaccine
• the pneumococcal vaccination guidelines and using the pneumococcal vaccination tool
• changes to the National Immunisation Program.

An application has been made to the RACGP for 4 Category 2 CPD points for this activity.

For more information or to register, visit www.primaryhealthtas.com.au/events or contact Rebekah Sheahen on 6425 8500 or at rsheahen@primaryhealthtas.com.au

Cardiac rhythm management presentation

Launceston
20 June 6:30pm – 9pm

Ulverstone
23 June 6:30pm – 9pm

Charles Clinic Heart Care is hosting an event for GPs on cardiac rhythm management. The session will be facilitated by Dr Geoff Evans, Dr Alex Jacobsen and Dr Greg Hasking, and will cover cardiac devices and their management in heart failure.

Please RSVP by 16 June.

For more information or to RSVP contact Jan Dawkins on 6311 1555 or at jan.dawkins@charlesheart.care

Hepatitis C new treatments course

Ulverstone
24 June 10am – 3:30pm

Please note change from incorrect date of 23 June in GP Update

This course, hosted by the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine, will increase participants’ knowledge, skills and confidence when prescribing new direct-acting antivirals in accordance with PBS requirements or when advising patients about new therapies. It will also address patient management, screening for cirrhotic status, management of comorbidities, treatment choice and monitoring.

Dr Albert Nwaba – gastroenterologist and hepatologist, and Prof Louise Owen – sexual health physician, will be facilitating.

Participants are eligible for 40 Category 1 CPD points from the RACGP.

For more information or to register visit goo.gl/yrZltS

Wound management seminar

Launceston
28 June 8:30am – 4:00pm

Smith & Nephew is hosting a wound management seminar for practice nurses, community nurses and aged care services.

The event will address anatomy and physiology of skin, holistic wound assessment, principles of wound bed preparation and wound product solutions.

The event is endorsed by the Australian College of Nursing, and nurses may be eligible for 5.5 CPD hours from the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

For more information and to register visit goo.gl/WRHrhu
palliAGED palliative care resource

CareSearch has launched a new resource to support providers in finding and using palliative care evidence in aged care – the palliAGED resource.

palliAGED is funded by the Australian Government and managed by Flinders University through CareSearch.

Built by clinical experts, academics, peak bodies and those providing direct care, palliAGED houses an evidence centre with resources including evidence summaries collating the latest evidence on a range of care topics, and pathways to existing clinical evidence through clinical links.

The site also houses the palliAGEDgp app and the palliAGEDnurse app.

More information visit www.palliaged.com.au

Situational approach to suicide prevention resource

The Australian Institute of Male Health Studies and Western Sydney University have developed a resource exploring a new approach to male suicide prevention that acknowledges the predominant association of situational distress, rather than mental illness, with suicide.

This resource, along with many others, is available on the Male Suicide Prevention Australia website at www.malesuicidepreventionaustralia.com.au

Digital Health Guide

In response to GP requests, Semantic Consulting, with support from Primary Health Tasmania, has developed the Digital Health Guide – an online resource for information about health apps for patients.

The Digital Health Guide was created to help health providers understand the quality of digital health solutions, and to promote an evidence-based approach to the use of digital health solutions.

The tool allows providers to:

1. quickly understand the mobile health app or digital health solution that a patient is using
2. ‘prescribe’ the use of an appropriate mobile health app or digital health solution.

To access the Digital Health Guide visit digitalhealthguide.com.au and log in with username: connectingcare and password: health.

You can also register for a personal account which will allow you to write a review. Register at bit.ly/activatedhg

BeyondNow suicide prevention app

beyondblue has launched an app to help people, in particular men, to create a safety plan when they are experiencing suicidal thoughts or are in a suicidal crisis – the BeyondNow app.

The app is designed to be used as part of an overall mental wellbeing and safety strategy. GPs can support patients in personalising safety plans that involve psychologists, psychiatrists and carers.

The free app can be downloaded from the Apple App store and Google Play store. Individuals can also create a safety plan at www.beyondblue.org.au/beyond-now

beyondblue Healthy Families website

beyondblue has launched a website to support families in helping children and young people be mentally healthy.

The website is targeted at parents, guardians, grandparents, relatives and family friends. It provides age and topic-specific information, assessments, forums and checklists to give families the knowledge and confidence to support children and young people.

More information is available at www.healthyfamilies.org.au
Feedback? Suggestions?

If you would like to comment on any aspect of the General Practice Matters newsletter, or to submit an article, email comms@primaryhealthtas.com.au or call 1300 653 169.

Disclaimer: While the Australian Government helped fund this document, it has not reviewed the content and is not responsible for any injury, loss or damage however arising from the use of or reliance on the information provided herein.

Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this newsletter is accurate, however Primary Health Tasmania will not accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising directly or indirectly from any use of or reliance on this information, which comes from a range of sources.

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General practice vacancies

In the past, Primary Health Tasmania has maintained a list of general practice vacancies on its website.

Health Recruitment PLUS (HR+) provides a tailored general practice recruitment service, which includes a searchable list of vacancies via its website.

To avoid duplication, Primary Health Tasmania will refer all future requests to list general practice vacancies to HR+.

HR+ can be contacted direct via recruitment@healthrecruitmentplus.com.au

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