



B Part of It NT Frequently Asked Questions

What is B Part of It NT?

The B Part of It NT study is offering a free licenced meningococcal B vaccination to all young people aged 14-19 years in the Northern Territory (NT). The study will look at how well the vaccination protects against meningococcal disease and the spread of meningococcal bugs, as well as whether the vaccine can protect against the sexually transmitted infection, gonorrhoea.

Young people can receive the free immunisation through their school or community health clinic throughout 2021. Participants will need two doses of the meningococcal B vaccine (the Bexsero vaccine) two months apart. Participants will also need to provide two throat swabs approximately twelve months apart.

Why is it important for young people to be involved?

B Part of It NT allows young people the opportunity to protect themselves against meningococcal B infection by receiving the licenced meningococcal B immunisation which is recommended by the Australian Government for people in this age group. In addition the study will also help to work out whether the immunisation against meningococcal B disease can protect against gonorrhoea.

Who can be involved?

B Part of It NT is available to young people aged 14-19 years in the Northern Territory, who have not previously received the meningococcal B immunisation.

How can young people get involved?

Young people who live in the Northern Territory and are aged 14-19 years can join the study through their school program or a community health clinic. Participants will need to take part in all steps of the study, including receiving two doses of the licenced meningococcal B immunisation (Bexsero) approximately two months apart, have two throat swabs taken and completing a short questionnaire. There will be 12 months between the first and second throat swab. Immunisation locations and dates can be found on the B Part of It NT website.

What is meningococcal B?

Meningococcal disease is an uncommon, but very serious infection that can develop very quickly when the meningococcal bacteria (bugs) enters the body from the throat and nose. The meningococcus germ (bacteria) can be carried in the nose and throat of up to 20% of young people, without causing any harm. Occasionally, the meningococcus bug enters the bloodstream from the throat and causes meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal disease affects all age groups, but is most common in children under 5 years of age and in young people aged 15 to 24 years. The meningococcal bugs (bacteria) are spread through direct contact such as intimate kissing, or when a person carrying the germ (bacteria) coughs or sneezes and small droplets containing the meningococcus are breathed in by people around them.



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Why do I need to be protected against meningococcal B?

Meningococcal B is a devastating infection, that can come on very quickly and makes those affected very sick, even causing death. It can be prevented by getting immunised.

There are several strains of the meningococcus germ (bacteria) that cause infection (disease) and you need to be immunised against all of them to be protected. The meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero) will protect those immunised against meningococcal B infection (disease).

Have I already been vaccinated against meningococcal B?

There are six main strains of meningococcal bugs (bacteria) - A,B,C,W,X and Y.

A number of young people are likely to have already been immunised against meningococcal A, C, W and Y either as part of the National Immunisation Program or through the Northern Territory state wide rollout in 2017, that offered the immunisation to all children aged 1-19.

In order to be protected against meningococcal B disease, you need to receive the meningococcal B immunisation separately.

Meningococcal B immunisation records are available on the Australian Immunisation Register and if you are unsure as to whether you have received this, you can contact your immunisation provider or GP to check.

What is gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can infect both men and women. Gonorrhoea is a common infection, especially among people aged 15-24 years. Gonorrhoea is spread from one person to another during all types of unprotected sexual activity. A pregnant woman with gonorrhoea can give the infection to her baby during childbirth and it may also cause infertility (inability to have children), especially in women.

Why do I need to be protected against Gonorrhoea?

Gonorrhoea is a harmful STI that has been detected in up to one in five 14-19 year olds in some parts of the NT. Gonorrhoea can cause many serious and permanent health problems, including infertility (unable to get pregnant). Four out of five women with gonorrhoea have no symptoms. If a woman has 3 or more gonorrhoea infections she has a greater than 50% (1 in 2) chance of not being able to get pregnant.

Is this a vaccine trial?

No. The meningococcal B immunisation provided in this study (Bexsero) is already licenced and recommended vaccine for infants and adolescents in Australia.

This study will measure how effective the meningococcal B immunisation is against meningococcal carriage (bugs found in the throat, not causing infection but able to be spread), meningococcal disease and for protection against gonorrhoea.



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Is the vaccination safe?

Yes, the meningococcal B vaccine provided in this study (Bexsero) is licensed and available in Australia and many countries around the world. Over 15 million doses of the vaccine have already been given to children and the vaccination is safe and is licenced and recommended for infants and adolescents in Australia. The meningococcal B vaccine is included in the National Immunisation Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 2 years of age and any individual at increased risk of meningococcal disease.

Does the immunisation have any side effects?

The immunisation (Bexsero vaccine) is safe, but like any medication it can have some side effects. These are usually short-lasting and do not require special treatment.

Common reactions following the meningococcal B immunisation (Bexsero vaccine) may include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, fever, generally feeling unwell, nausea, dizziness, headache and painful muscles or joints. If the reaction seems severe or persists and you are concerned, we recommend that you seek further advice from your doctor, health centre, immunisation nurse or hospital.

What does the study involve for participants?

Each participant will be involved in the study for 12 months. Over this period the participant will have three visits to their health clinic or immunisation provider or be seen by the Health Promoting School Nurses (HPSN) three times, through the school immunisation program.

Visits will be as follows;

First visit

- Provide the first throat swab
- Complete brief questionnaire
- Receive first Immunisation (one dose of the Bexsero vaccine)
- Receive voucher/gift card

Second visit (two months after the original visit)

- Receive second immunisation (One dose of the Bexsero vaccine)
- Receive voucher/gift card
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Third visit (12 months after the first visit)

- Provide the second throat swab
- Complete brief questionnaire
- Receive voucher/gift card

Overall, participants who take part in all steps of the study will receive their immunisation (two free doses of the licenced meningococcal B vaccine, Bexsero), complete a brief questionnaire, provide two throat swabs to test for presence of the meningococcus germ (bacteria) and receive a voucher at each of your three visits for your time.



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Why do I need to go back for a second immunisation?

Participants will need to receive two immunisations of the meningococcal B vaccine, Bexsero, two months apart, to fully protect themselves against meningococcal B disease.

What are the throat swabs for?

The throat swabs will allow us to collect samples from participating young people to see whether meningococcal bugs (bacteria) are present in the throat.

What does the throat swab involve?

A cotton tipped swab is rubbed gently on the back of the throat very briefly (1-2 seconds). This is very safe but may cause minor discomfort and in some individuals a gagging sensation may occur. No side effects were reported from any of the 35,000 students who had two swabs taken in a similar study in South Australia.

How will you know if the immunisation has worked?

The NT government routinely counts the number of cases of meningococcal disease and gonorrhoea in the NT. We will look at the number of cases after the study and see whether the meningococcal B vaccine leads to less cases of these infections.

What are the community benefits of the study?

B Part of It NT aims to reduce the impact of meningococcal B and gonorrhoea among young people living in the NT.

Meningococcal B and gonorrhoea are both harmful infections that can cause long term health issues. This study offers young people, vaccinations that will protect them against meningococcal B and will help to determine whether it also provides protection against gonorrhoea.

Who is leading this study?

B Part of It NT is led by the University of Adelaide. The lead investigators for the study are Professor Helen Marshall and Professor James Ward, together with their teams. The NT team includes study coordinator Kaylene Prince and Joanne "Annie" Gerrell.

Who else is involved in the study?

The study is being conducted across the Northern Territory by the University of Adelaide and is being led by university researchers in partnership with NT Health, Australian Department of Health, SA Health the Women's and Children Hospital Foundation and AMSANT. The vaccines to conduct the study have been provided by GlaxoSmithKline the manufacturers of the vaccine and the funding for the study is being provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).



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Why are you doing this study?

Meningococcal B and gonorrhoea are severe infections in Australian young people, and the rates of infection are particularly high in the Northern Territory. This study will measure whether the meningococcal B immunisation can reduce meningococcal infection (disease) and the risk of spread of the germ (bacteria) from person to person in the Northern Territory. In addition, it will measure if it can protect against gonococcal infection (gonorrhoea).

Why is this age group selected for this study and not infants?

Meningococcal bugs (bacteria) can be carried in the nose and throat of around 10% of the population without causing harm, however this can increase to up to 25% in adolescents and young adults, putting this age group at higher risk of spreading the infection. Rates of gonorrhoea are highest in 15-19 year olds in the NT.

Based on their higher disease risk, the meningococcal B immunisation is recommended for adolescents aged 15-19 years of age by the Australian Government.

Can I get the immunisation if I'm not within the age group?

Free immunisations as part of this study are only available for those aged 14 to 19 years who agree to be involved in the study. Young people outside of this age bracket or those who chose not to participate in the study can purchase the meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero) privately through their GP at a cost of approximately \$300 per course per adolescent.

What if I don't want to participate?

Participation in the B Part of It NT study is completely voluntary. This means you can say No.

Why is the study taking place in the NT?

The study is conducted in the NT as a result of the high rates of both meningococcal disease and gonorrhoea in the NT compared to the rest of Australia. In 2017 in the NT, meningococcal disease rates were found to be as high as those in South Australia, which was the state with the highest rate of meningococcal B disease in Australia at the time. Gonorrhoea has been detected in up to 20% (1 in 5) of 14- 19 year olds in some parts of the NT. This infection can have some serious long-term impacts, including infertility.

What happens if I don't get the second immunisation within the timeframe?

Two doses of the meningococcal vaccine, Bexsero, are required to provide long term protection against meningococcal disease and possibly gonorrhoea. Therefore, you are recommended to receive two doses of the vaccines two months apart. If there are any delays in receiving the second immunisation, the second dose should be given as soon as possible.

Will the B Part of It NT vaccination protect me against meningococcal B?

Yes. The Meningococcal B Vaccine (Bexsero) has been proven to provide good protection against meningococcal B disease.



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Will the B Part of It NT vaccination protect me against gonorrhoea?

Maybe, this is what the B Part of It NT study hopes to find out. It is proven that the meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero) provides protection against meningococcal B, and it is possible that the vaccine may also protect against gonorrhoea.

The study will measure if the vaccination protects against gonorrhoea by counting the number of people with gonorrhoea in the Northern Territory. You don't need an STI test as part of this study.

Does being in the study and being vaccinated with the meningococcal B vaccine protect me against STIs? Do I still need to practise safe sex?

It is not yet known if the meningococcal B vaccine can protect you against gonorrhoea, and it won't protect you against other STIs. So you still need to practise safe sex, use a condom and be regularly tested for STIs to protect yourself.

Do I get tested for STIs as part of this study?

No, the B Part of It NT study only tests for meningococcus bacteria.

Will this study be impacted by COVID19?

COVID19 will not impact the results of this study, and any young person who has previously had COVID19 is still able to participate.

The B Part of It NT study team will follow COVID19 safety advice from NT Health and all nurses and healthcare staff will take care to implement social distancing practices. If you are sick on the day of your study visit, stay home and make a new appointment.

B Part of It NT-PLUS

What is B Part of It NT-PLUS?

B Part of It NT-PLUS is a way for young people in NT to provide advice to the researchers who are running the B Part of It NT study. B Part of It NT-PLUS will involve workshops/yarning circles for young people from across the Northern Territory.

Can I join B Part of It NT-PLUS?

Yes, young people aged 16-21 years are invited to join B Part of It NT-PLUS and we would love to hear what you have to share. You can get involved in B Part of It NT-PLUS workshops even if you do not want to take part in the B Part of It NT study – that's up to you.



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What will I need to do?

You will take part in a B Part of It NT-PLUS workshop/yarning circle/brain-storming session with other young people and a researcher (face-to-face or online). Taking part is voluntary – if you do not want to, you can say no. You will be asked to share ideas about ways to promote the B Part of It NT study, how to encourage young people to join, how to make sure they come back for study visits and concerns that people may have. You might be asked to give feedback on posters and ads for TV, radio or social media. We also want to know what you think about research generally and ways to involve young people.

How do I find out more?

We will be working with groups and organisations for you people, so check with your local group to see if they are involved. You can also contact the researcher leading B Part of It NT-PLUS, here bhavya.balasubramanya@menzies.edu.au.