

Meningitis B vaccine to be introduced in Scotland later in the summer



The Scottish Government has announced that from 1 September, the meningitis B vaccine will be introduced to the routine childhood vaccination programme in Scotland.

Scotland is now one of the few nations in the world to offer the vaccination, which will offer protection against the life-threatening strain of meningitis to all infants.

The vaccination will be given in three doses at two, four and 12 months, with all infants in Scotland who are aged two months when the vaccine is introduced being eligible. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has also advised that when the programme starts there should be a one-off, catch-up programme for infants aged three and four months of age who will be attending for their routine vaccinations.

Additionally, in response to an increase in the number of cases of meningitis W, and based on advice from the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation, a MenACWY vaccine will be introduced to replace the MenC vaccine used in the adolescents and freshers vaccination programmes.

From 1 August that vaccine will be offered to students under the age of 25 attending university for the first time this Autumn, along with a catch-up programme for all 14 to 18 year olds.

Health Secretary Shona Robison said:

“These two new vaccination programmes will offer families in

Scotland extra peace of mind.

“We’re delighted to be one of the first countries in the world to introduce a nationwide MenB vaccination programme to help tackle the effects of this disease, which can be devastating for children and their families.

“The Scottish Government has been consistent in its support for the introduction of this vaccine and today’s announcement underlines our commitment to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our children.

“Around 1,200 people – mainly babies and children – get meningitis B each year in the UK, and around one in 10 die from the infection.

“I am also very pleased to see the expedited launch of the MenW vaccine prevention programme for teenagers. This vaccine also protects against MenA, MenC and MenY, making sure young people are protected at such an important time in their academic lives.”

Chief Executive of Meningitis Now, Sue Davie said:

“We’re delighted to see these vaccination programmes moving forward and offering protection to new babies and young people across Scotland. Today’s announcement is a tribute to the tireless and selfless efforts of our supporters, for many of whom sadly these vaccines come too late. We are ready to support the introductions in any way we can.”

Scotland Manager of Meningitis Research Foundation, Mary Millar said:

“On behalf of our Scottish members of Meningitis Research Foundation who have been affected by this deadly disease, we are delighted to welcome the MenB vaccine for babies and MenACWY vaccine for teenagers and students. These two programmes are the culmination of years of research which will

spare countless families the trauma of seeing a loved one die or left seriously disabled by meningitis and septicaemia.”

Gemma Lessells from Inverkeithing said:

“My son Matthew contracted meningitis B in 2010 when he was 13 months old. He was quiet and had a temperature at 4pm. He started being sick at 6 pm and by 10 pm he was in hospital fighting for his life. He had cannulas everywhere, they were taking his blood pressure every 15 minutes. His heart rate was 210 and his temperature on admission was 40.9.

“We were incredibly lucky – Matthew survived, though has delayed expressive speech and suffered night terrors following his hospital stay. We are also in the process of discussing possible behavioural side effects with his Health Visitor, but other than that we have a gorgeous healthy happy boy with a laugh that lights up a room. I would not want any parent or child to go through what we did, and welcome news of the implementation of these two new vaccines in Scotland.”