



## Immunisation – new and amended listings

The National Immunisation Program (NIP) has been amended from 1 July 2020 to improve protection for those most at risk from potentially fatal meningococcal and pneumococcal diseases.

For the first time, the meningococcal B vaccine is now available for free to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants under two years. A catch-up program will be available until 30 June 2023. Approximately 20,000 Indigenous children are expected to be vaccinated each year.

Other changes to the NIP include:

- People aged 70 years and over are eligible for the pneumococcal vaccine based on expert medical advice that people aged over 70 years old are in need of the most protection.
- After they turn 50, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are eligible for three pneumococcal vaccines.
- More people with medical conditions that place them at a higher risk of infection can access free pneumococcal, meningococcal ACWY and the Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib) vaccines.

### Why is this important?

Immunisation protects and saves lives. Meningococcal and pneumococcal diseases are rare but can kill, and have serious effects for survivors.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are almost four times as likely to contract meningococcal as non-Indigenous children.

Maintaining high rates of immunisation against vaccine preventable disease is vital to keep them under control in all Australian communities. This is even more important as the nation enters a critical stage in the fight to suppress COVID-19.

Australia has record high childhood immunisation rates of 94.77% for five year old children and 96.9% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

**Who will benefit?**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged two years and under will benefit from free meningococcal vaccines.

People aged over 70, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 50 and people of all ages with medical conditions that increase their risk will get free pneumococcal vaccination.

More than 260,000 people will benefit from these new and amended listings each year.

**How much will this cost?**

The Government will invest \$49 million from 2020–21 to 2023–24.