

Frequently Asked Questions

The B Part of It Study

When did this study take place?

The B Part of It study took place between April 01 – June 30th in 2017 and 2018. The additional ‘School Leaver’ study took place in 2018-2020. Both the high school B Part of It study and the follow-up School Leaver Study have completed and the results have been published.

Who initiated the study?

The study was initiated and led by Professor Helen Marshall, Deputy Director, Robinson Research Institute, The University of Adelaide. Helen Marshall partnered with SA Health, SA Pathology and other providers to implement the study which is funded by the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK).

How many people participated in the study?

34,489 high school students participated in the initial study and had a baseline swab collected. Following this, the School Leaver study involved an additional 7,500 students.

Including nurses and administrative staff involved, it is estimated that the B Part of It study involved over 42,000 people in South Australia.

What was the process behind vaccinating such a large number of students?

Led by the University of Adelaide in partnership with SA Health, this study was possible thanks to the collaborative relationships in South Australia across health, education, academia, industry and government.

The study was able to utilise the existing relations and protocols established by SA Health to implement the study throughout South Australia. In particular, the study uses the resources of the SA Health school-based immunisation program to implement the roll out of the study.

All participating schools were randomised by a computer into two groups: Group A and Group B. All students, in both school groups, were offered the two free doses of meningococcal B vaccine between 2017 and 2018. Students attending Group A schools received two meningococcal B vaccine doses and a throat swab between in 2017 and then received a second throat swab 12 months later in 2018.

Students attending group B schools received a throat swab only in 2017 and then received two meningococcal B vaccine doses and a second throat swab in 2018.

2017 Year 12 students who attended group B schools were still able to receive the two free doses of vaccine after they left school in 2018; students were contacted and informed regarding where they could attend clinics in 2018.

Why didn't all the vaccinations happen at once?

The study process, to assess the herd immunity impact of the meningococcal B vaccine, required two groups (one vaccinated initially and one not) to compare the difference in carriage of the meningococcal bacteria between the two groups over time.

Vaccinations were rolled out across both 2017 and 2018 to work with the availability of immunisation nurses, and to fit in with the wider immunisation program at South Australian schools. This scheduling helped to ensure that all students could receive two doses of the vaccine, to provide protection against meningococcal disease. The throat swabs from the students who were vaccinated in 2017 were compared with the throat swabs from the students who were vaccinated in 2018.

Why were young people selected as the age group for the study?

At the start of the study, South Australia had one of the highest rates of meningococcal B disease in Australia, with a high proportion of cases occurring in adolescents.

Meningococcal bacteria can be carried without causing harm in the nose and throat of around 10 per cent of the population, however this can increase to up to 25 per cent in adolescents and young adults.

Based on their higher disease risk, the meningococcal B vaccine is recommended for adolescents aged 15-19 years of age and also babies and young children, particularly those aged less than two years.

This study examined if the licensed and recommended meningococcal B vaccine reduced the spread of meningococcal bacteria in teenagers.

What was the 'School Leaver' study?

The B Part of It school leaver study was conducted from 2018-2020 and involved the collection of throat swabs from individuals aged 17-25 years old. The purpose was to assess the potential impact of the meningococcal B vaccine on herd immunity for South Australian students who were in Year 12 in the preceding year.

Did international students participate in the study?

Yes, international students participated in the study. Students were able to participate if they were enrolled in a participating South Australian school, in years 10, 11 or 12 in 2017, for a minimum of a full school year. Students also had to obtain consent from their parents / legal guardian if they were less than 18 years old.

I think I was involved in the study - how do I know if I received the vaccine?

All immunised students were provided with a certificate of vaccination by their immunisation provider to confirm that they had received their dose/s. The meningococcal B vaccine records are available on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). Students can contact their immunisation provider or General Practitioner to check their vaccine record.