

# Doctors' Voice

September/October 2013

## New additions to the National Immunisation Program (NIP)

The addition of two new vaccines to the NIP means that Australian children will now require two less injections by the time they are four years old while ensuring they are protected against the same number of serious diseases.

The number of diseases children are protected against remains the same because the new combination vaccines are replacing existing individual vaccines. The new additions are *Priorix-Tetra*® (measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox)) and *Menitorix*® (Haemophilus influenza type B and Group C Meningococcal). These are all viral diseases.

The inclusion of *Priorix-Tetra*® in the program will allow children to complete the MMR schedule by 18 months. Previously this would have been completed at four years of age. Children who have already received their 12 month MMR and 18 month varicella vaccinations will still be immunised with their second dose of MMR at 4 years of age.

*Menitorix*® is a vaccine used to prevent two diseases (Haemophilus influenza type B and Group C Meningococcal) which can both cause meningitis in children. *Menitorix*® replaces two injections on the current schedule, so the diseases protected against will remain the same.

Professor Robert Booy, who is Head of the Clinical Research team at the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) welcomed the development saying that 'reducing needle burden' was important in overcoming barriers to better immunisation rates.

"Clearly the longer term advantages of immunisation outweigh the short term discomfort, so we need to keep educating parents on the benefits where possible. However if parents are anxious about the number of injections children receive at one visit or encounter then we need to focus on developing a program that maintains childhood protection while minimising the number of injections and maintaining a high level of safety. We know that an important aim in maximising coverage against disease is to reduce stress by using the smallest possible number of injections," said Professor Booy.

If parents have any questions on immunisation or the updated NIP schedule please ask your GP or practice nurse.

## cdmNet

### *What is cdmNet?*

CdmNet is an online web-based service designed to make it easier for general practitioners and patients to take a systematic approach to managing chronic conditions.

### *Why use cdmNet?*

It encourages planning and collaboration between you, your GP, and your entire care team. Evidence strongly suggests that patient outcomes are improved with planned, collaborative care, including regular follow up and review, and where the patient is involved in their own care.

cdmNet facilitates best practice care and helps you take control of your illness and its treatment. Independent university trials show that this can result in significant improvements in your health and wellness.

Using cdmNet, you will be reminded by SMS or email of upcoming appointments you need to make with your GP or care team.

Through the cdmNet web site, you will also have complete access, anywhere and anytime, to your own health record and care plan. You will be able to view the contact details for your entire care team and get directions to the locations of any of your care providers.

You can also interact with cdmNet via your mobile phone (if internet enabled), allowing you to walk into a pharmacist or hospital anywhere in the world and provide them with your complete health details, including contact information for your entire care team.

### *How do I register?*

cdmNet is free to all patients. Speak to your GP or Practice Nurse to register for the service.

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## eHealth Records- why your child should have one

Keeping track of your child's health information, in particular immunisations can be very challenging for busy parents. By registering your child for an eHealth record, all their health information can be available to you and your child's healthcare professionals wherever and whenever it is needed, including the middle of the night.

An eHealth record is designed to grow in information as your child grows, and accompanies them throughout their life.

Child specific features in an eHealth record include:

- **The Australian Childhood Immunisation Register**- this documents all the preschool immunisations, regardless of where that immunisation was given
- **Child Development Record**- this has been modeled on the baby book and includes growth charts and alerts for important things like when immunisations and child health checks are due. You can also record your child's developmental achievements, such as when they started crawling or when they started eating solids.



The '**my child's eHealth record mobile APP**' enables you to view and record data in the Child Development Record.

The APP also tracks important alerts and reminders.

To register your child for a record, you need to be registered yourself first. Registration can be done online at [www.ehealth.gov.au](http://www.ehealth.gov.au), or at any Medicare Office. Some general practices and pharmacies are also able to help with registration - ask them at your next visit.

Only one parent can register a child for an eHealth record; however the other parent can be added as an authorised representative so that both parents can access the record. All children under 18 can be registered for an eHealth record by a parent, and the record remains linked to the parent's record until the child is 18. Children can however, request a separate record from the age of 14 onwards.

If you have any ideas for topics, please speak to your GP or Practice Nurse

## Pap Tests

The pap test is a quick and simple test that checks for particular changes to the cells of a woman's cervix (neck of the womb). These changes may lead to cervical cancer if left untreated. In Australia, regular pap tests save more than 1,200 women each year from cervical cancer. Around eight in ten women who develop cervical cancer either have not had a pap smear or have not had them regularly.

All women aged between 18 and 70 years should have a pap test every two years. This includes women who have had the HPV vaccine, as the vaccine does not protect against all cancer-causing HPV types or those to which you may already have been exposed prior to vaccination. Lesbians and some women who have had a hysterectomy should have regular pap tests, as should women who are in a long-term relationship or who are no longer sexually active.

Risk factors for developing cervical cancer include:

- the presence of some types of the human papillomavirus (HPV) on the cervix
- smoking
- the presence of sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia
- early age first intercourse
- early age first childbirth
- number of sexual partners
- long-term use of the contraceptive pill.

Women who have had at least two normal pap test results in the five years before turning 70 can stop having pap tests. Women over 70 who have not been having regular two-yearly pap tests may need to keep having pap tests for a few more years. If you want to keep having pap tests when over 70, that's fine too. Discuss this with your doctor or practice nurse.

Ref: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)