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| Paracetamol use in relation to local council’s administering Bexsero® vaccine |
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# Background

Bexsero® vaccine was introduced on to the National Immunisation Program from 1 July 2020. In accordance with the Australian Immunisation Handbook, meningococcal B vaccine (Bexsero®) requires the administration of paracetamol to children aged less than two years, 30 minutes before the vaccine is administered or as soon as practicable after administration of every dose due to the common incidence of fever post vaccination.

Paracetamol for infants and young children in liquid formulation is classified as either a Schedule 2 poison or a Schedule 3 poison for larger pack sizes. A Schedule 2 poison may be obtained from a pharmacy by self-selection. A Schedule 3 poison requires advice from the pharmacist and is supplied for individuals on a case by case basis. A municipal council would need to hold a current health services permit in order to purchase paracetamol from a wholesaler.

# Issue

A municipal council or registered nurse or midwife employed or appointed by the municipal council is authorised under the Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances (DPCS) Regulations 2017 (reg 7(1) Item 20) to possess the Schedule 4 poisons necessary for immunisation programs coordinated by the council in accordance with the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. Currently the Schedule 4 poisons for the purpose of immunisation are specified vaccines and the treatment of anaphylactic reaction to the vaccines.

The authorisation in reg 7(1) Item 20 does not enable the municipal council to purchase Schedule 2 or Schedule 3 poisons from a wholesaler. The municipal council would need to hold a current health service permit from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Medicines and Poisons Regulation Branch in order to purchase or obtain Schedule 2 poisons or Schedule 3 poisons from a wholesaler.

A registered nurse or midwife employed or appointed by the municipal council and acting under the Secretary Approval for nurse immunisers in the DPCS Regulations 2017 may purchase a Schedule 2 poison from a pharmacy. The purchase and use would need to be in accordance with policy and guidelines issued by the municipal council for the delivery of vaccination services. The nurse or midwife could not supply the Schedule 2 poison to be taken away (i.e. a nurse could not hand out a bottle of paracetamol to the parent to keep).

# Advice

A registered immunisation nurse acting under the Secretary Approval, employed or appointed by a municipal council may possess paracetamol as a Schedule 2 poison if it is necessary for immunisation programs coordinated by the council. However, paracetamol administration would need to be in accordance with policy and guidelines of the municipal council. A municipal council would need to hold a health services permit in order to purchase Schedule 2 or Schedule 3 paracetamol from a wholesaler.

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