

# BUG BULLETIN

THE LATEST INFORMATION ABOUT HEALTH PROTECTION  
IN WESTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT

THE BUG BULLETIN IS NOW AVAILABLE  
AS A DIGITAL NEWSLETTER AND WILL NO  
LONGER BE AVAILABLE IN HARDCOPY.

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## Environmental Health



### BLOOD LEAD LEVEL INVESTIGATION

Western Sydney Public Health Unit investigate all notified cases of lead poisoning to determine possible sources and prevent further risk. In 2015 and 2016 environmental investigation of two notifications in children <5 years of age revealed possible association with a traditional cosmetic eye product called Kajal. The products sourced from Pakistan were being applied to the children's eyelids. Two samples submitted to the laboratory revealed lead contents of 28.9% and 90%. These results corresponded to elevated blood

lead levels above 5 ug/dL and 10 ug/dL respectively in the children.

#### What is Kajal and how is it used:

Kajal (also known as Kohl) is a popular traditional cosmetic product made from a black powder that is applied either around the eyes or as a mark on the forehead of children, right from birth. Kajal is composed of kohl stone, which is made out of a rock called galena. This rock is primarily composed of lead sulfide and if ground to form Kohl can accidentally create elemental lead, a dangerous and toxic product. Application of Kajal is a

longstanding practice in communities from South Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Kajal is a traditional custom thought to have a number of benefits to the child including:

- Protecting the eyes from infections.
- Protecting the eyesight and vision from the harsh and harmful rays of the sun
- Coolant for the eyes
- To enlarge the eyes and improve vision
- Protection from the evil eye or "buri nazar"

#### Health risks of Kajal:

When applied to the eyes, Kajal can increase the levels of lead in the bloodstream. Prolonged usage can cause death due to lead poisoning. The risk of Kajal sourced from overseas is that it may contain high levels of lead.

Many cosmetic brands only use the term Kohl to describe the product, rather than its actual ingredients. Consumers should verify whether or not the Kohl is lead-free before use. Modern eye cosmetics are marketed as Kohl but are prepared differently and in accordance with relevant health standards and therefore are safer alternatives.

#### What you can do:

There are many sub-groups within our Western Sydney community who may be unaware of the risks of these traditional practices. Provide advice to refugees and immigrant parents and their families about lead content of traditional eye cosmetics, and consider lead screening testing as clinically indicated.

#### Centre for Population Health

Parramatta Office  
Gungurra (Building 68)  
Cumberland Campus

Locked Bag 7118  
Parramatta BC, NSW 2124

Phone (02) 9840 3603

Fax (02) 9840 3608

Email [WSLHD-CentreForPopulationHealth@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:WSLHD-CentreForPopulationHealth@health.nsw.gov.au)

Director, Centre for Population Health  
A/Prof Stephen Corbett



If you have any suggestions or stories to share please contact the ID team on  
**02 9840 3603**

## Immunisation

### NSW MENINGOCOCCAL W RESPONSE PROGRAM

During 2017, Year 11 and 12 high school students have been offered Meningococcal ACWY (Menactra) vaccine in Term 2 and 3, under the Meningococcal W Response Program.

Catch-ups will be offered at school until the end of the year, and will coincide in schools as the School Vaccination Team routinely visit Year 7 students.

During 2017, GPs can provide Menactra to any Year 11 or 12 students who have missed vaccination at school, or young adults aged 17 and 18 years who have already left school.

The vaccine is now available to order from NSW Vaccine Centre on the routine on-line monthly ordering system.

### Communicable Diseases

The annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia is expected to take place between 30 August and 4 September 2017. Pilgrims will soon be returning home.

Please consider Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) if they develop a fever and cough or shortness of breath within 14 days after returning from their trip.

MERS-CoV is a new virus that has caused respiratory illness in a number of people in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia. If you suspect MERS-CoV in your patient, please notify the Public Health Unit on 9840 3603 and seek specialist Infectious Disease advice. Please visit the [NSW Health website](#) for more information.

### ALERTS & RELATED RESOURCES



**Zoster vaccine is a live attenuated vaccine. If there is any doubt to the person's suitability, then do not vaccinate and seek further advice.**

- Screening for contraindications pre-vaccination checklist and,
- [Guide to safe dose of immunosuppressive therapy for Zostavax administration](#)
- [Webinar](#)
- [Zostavax Contraindications](#)
- Additional resources  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/Shingles-program.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/Shingles-program.aspx)  
[shingles.com.au/pdf/DL\\_design\\_web\\_i1.pdf](http://shingles.com.au/pdf/DL_design_web_i1.pdf)

#### Private Market Hepatitis B Shortage:

- Clinical advice for vaccination providers on the use of hepatitis B vaccines during supply shortages – By: The Australian Technical Advisory Groups on Immunisation (ATAGI)  
[www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/67D8681A67167949CA257E2E000EE07D/\\$File/ATAGI-advice-HepBvac-shortage.pdf](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/67D8681A67167949CA257E2E000EE07D/$File/ATAGI-advice-HepBvac-shortage.pdf)  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/hep-b-shortage.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/hep-b-shortage.aspx)

#### Additional Commonwealth and NSW-funded free vaccines

- [Vaccine provider factsheet](#)
- [Refugee catch-up](#)
- [Additional resources](#)