ZAC WAS A 22 YEAR OLD MEDICAL STUDENT WHO Lived LIFE TO THE FULL. HE WAS A FIT, STRONG GUY WHO LOVED ROWING AND ADVENTURES. HIS FRIENDS DUBBED HIM ‘PARTY BOY’.

On 8th July 2009 he woke up feeling unwell with a fever and vomiting. He went to his GP and from there to hospital with suspected flu. He had none of the warning signs of meningococcal disease. By 5pm that night he was in the high dependency unit. By 6:30pm he was in critical care on a ventilator. He died at 7:15pm that night of meningococcal septicaemia (blood poisoning).

His friends and family never got to say good bye as Zac never recovered consciousness. The hospital said his sudden death would have a profound and lasting effect on all those who knew him. Years down the track it is no easier.

Zac had received all his childhood vaccinations including the meningococcal B vaccine (MeNZB™) that was then provided through secondary schools. He didn’t know there was a vaccine for meningococcal C – the strain which killed him, or that it was recommended for high school and university students.

SYMPTOMS TO BE AWARE OF...

- HEADACHES
- FEVER
- STIFF NECK
- SORE JOINTS
- SENSITIVITY TO LIGHT
- NAUSEA
- VOMITING
- RASH
- EXHAUSTION

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE
MENINGITIS VACCINATION INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS
THE FACTS

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE IS CAUSED BY A TYPE OF BACTERIA, NEISSERIA MENINGITIDIS. UP TO 25% OF TEENAGERS CARRY THIS IN THEIR NOSE AND THROAT WITHOUT IT CAUSING THEM HARM.

It is not known exactly how in rare cases the bacteria get into the bloodstream, but young people are more likely to be affected. Those who are living at boarding school, hostels or residential halls are at even higher risk.

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE TAKES TWO FORMS:

• Inflammation of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis)
• An infection of the blood (septicaemia) in which bacterial toxins cause gangrene and multi-organ failure

15% of infected people die quickly, sometimes within hours of becoming unwell. Up to 20% of survivors are afflicted with long-term or life-long conditions, including brain damage, hearing loss or limb amputations.

DON’T WAIT... VACCINATE

Immunisation prevents meningococcal disease:

• The vaccine will protect you against four of the five types of bacteria responsible for meningitis
• The vaccine remains effective from three to five years (pretty much your student life!)

Your healthcare professional will be able to administer the vaccination.

HAVE I ALREADY BEEN VACCINATED?

The meningococcal B (MeNZB™) vaccine which some students may have received when they were at school does not protect against other forms of meningococcal disease, such as meningococcal C.

This means that unless you’ve visited your general practice and specifically asked for a meningococcal vaccination, you won’t be protected against the disease.

The vaccines which do protect against other forms of meningococcal are recommended by the Ministry of Health but are not funded (ie they are not free).

It is always important to see your medical practitioner promptly when you are feeling unwell. Some of the most serious illnesses, including meningococcal disease which can kill within hours, begin with common symptoms like a headache, sore throat or a fever. Most of the time you will get reassurance from your doctor, but occasionally you will need treatment. When you get the treatment you need it protects not only your health, but also the health of your friends and family.

THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH RECOMMENDS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE MOVING TO HOSTELS, ESPECIALLY IN THEIR FIRST YEAR, ARE VACCINATED AGAINST MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE...

Students in halls of residence are particularly vulnerable to meningococcal C infection, as it can spread very easily. The only sure way to protect against meningococcal disease is to get immunised. Many university students will have received the meningococcal B (MeNZB™) vaccine when they were at school, but there are other strains of meningococcus for which there is a vaccine available.

TALK TO STUDENT HEALTH OR YOUR GP ABOUT GETTING VACCINATED AGAINST MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE.