

Vaccine Preventable Disease

Meningococcal Vaccine Fact Sheet

Grade 7
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together

Youth are at the high risk for Meningococcal outbreaks. Reduce the risk and get vaccinated now to provide long lasting protection. This vaccine is publicly funded for Grade 7 students and provides protection against four different strains that cause Meningococcal disease.

What is Meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*. It can cause meningitis (swelling of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) or meningococemia (blood infection). People with Meningococcal disease have a sudden onset of symptoms, which may include fever, severe headache, a stiff neck, nausea, vomiting, and sometimes a rash. Youth are at high risk for outbreaks of meningitis.

How does Meningococcal disease spread?

Bacteria that cause Meningococcal disease are carried in the throat and nose of up to 30 per cent of healthy people. The bacteria can be spread by kissing, sharing eating utensils, coughing, sneezing, and any time saliva is passed from one person to another.

Is there a cure?

The disease can be treated with antibiotics. However, Meningococcal disease can be serious and up to 15 per cent of people who become ill can die. Death rates tend to be higher in the adolescent age group during outbreaks.

What is Menactra?

The Menactra vaccine provides protection against meningococcal groups A, C, Y and W-135. If your child has already been immunized with meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine, they are still eligible to receive the Menactra vaccine. Please provide previous vaccination date on the consent form.

Does Menactra have any side effects?

Less than half of the people who get this vaccine may experience redness, pain, and swelling where the vaccine was given. A few people get a fever or headache and feel ill. Putting ice on the site and/or using acetaminophen can help minimize pain, swelling and/or fever.

More severe reactions are rare. If your child has a more serious reaction, including trouble breathing, swelling of the mouth or face, hives, a rash, or a fever over 39 °C lasting longer than four days, **see a doctor and report it to the Health Unit.**

Who should not get the Meningococcal Type C Conjugate vaccine?

Your family health care provider may decide not to give your child's needle or may give a different vaccine if you or your child has:

- A high fever or serious infection worse than a cold
- Had an allergic reaction to a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine (Menjugate or NeisVac-C)
- A severe allergy to any parts of the vaccine including: tetanus toxoid (NeisVac-C), diphtheria toxoid (Menjugate), aluminum
- Religious or philosophical objections to any part of the vaccine

Pregnant women should discuss the need for Meningococcal C Conjugate vaccine with their doctor. People with a bleeding disorder should talk to the nurse before getting the vaccine. Infants should be two months of age before receiving the vaccine. People who have received the polysaccharide meningococcal vaccine must wait six months before they receive a Meningococcal Conjugate vaccine.

Information for students

On the day of the clinic:

- Make sure you eat a healthy breakfast and lunch.
- Wear loose short sleeves or loose fitting tops to ensure the upper arm can be easily exposed for injection.

Just before you get the vaccine:

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Relax your arm. This makes the immunization less painful.
- Don't look when the nurse gives the injection.
- Keep very still. Don't move or jerk your arm.
- When you finish, give yourself a pat on the back.

Just after you get the vaccine:

- Use your arm as you would normally.
- Remain on school property for 15 minutes in case you have any type of reaction.
- If your arm becomes a bit red or tender after the injection, an ice pack on your arm can feel soothing.