

Meningococcal C-Conjugate Vaccine Information

What is meningococcal disease?

Bacteria known as *Neisseria meningitidis* (commonly known as meningococcus) cause meningococcal disease. Many people (10% of the population) carry the bacteria at the back of their throat or nose without feeling sick. In rare instances, the bacteria overcome the body's natural defenses and cause serious diseases, including meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain) and septicemia (widespread infection involving the blood and multiple organs). Meningococcal disease is fatal in 8-15% of cases.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?

The symptoms of meningococcal disease can vary widely, but include sudden onset of high fever, severe headache, vomiting, stiff neck and a rash. Sensitivity to light, sleepiness, confusion and, in severe cases, coma may also occur.

What are the complications of meningococcal disease?

The consequences of meningococcal meningitis can be severe. Approximately 1 in 10 patients will die, and 11 - 19% of survivors will suffer some form of permanent disability such as hearing loss, neurological damage or limb loss.

How is the disease spread?

The meningococcus bacteria are spread by direct contact with respiratory and oral secretions (saliva, and/or nasal mucus) or, in other words, "swapping spit" with an infected person.

To prevent the spread of meningococcal disease, persons should not share objects that have come in contact with another person's mouth. Furthermore, persons should ensure good hand hygiene and use their sleeve or shoulder to cover coughs or sneezes.

Is there a vaccine to prevent meningococcal disease?

There are a number of vaccines, which protect against some of the various serogroups (strains) that cause meningococcal disease.

This meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine provide protection against invasive meningococcal disease caused by serogroup C *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria. It will not protect against other serogroups of invasive meningococcal disease, or other organisms that cause meningitis (infection of the brain or spinal cord) or septicaemia (infection of the blood).

Who should NOT receive this vaccine?

Individuals who:

- are allergic to the vaccine or any of its components.
- have previously had a neurological condition called Guillian-Barré Syndrome.
- are allergic to latex should consult with their health care provider before receiving this vaccine.
- have been vaccinated within the last 6 months with another *Neisseria meningitides* polysaccharide vaccine
- have been vaccinated within the last 1 month with another *Neisseria meningitides* conjugate vaccine.
- are on high dose corticosteroids or immunosuppressive agents, or who have immunosuppressive illness should delay vaccination until condition/treatment has resolved wherever possible.
- are pregnant or breastfeeding should consult with their health care practitioner.

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When should I call my health care provider?

You should call your health care provider or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if your child develops any of the following symptoms within three days of getting the needle:

- hives
- swelling of the mouth and throat
- trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- high fever (over 40° C or 104° F)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious reaction to vaccines

Whom should I talk to if I have any questions?

For more information, please contact your doctor/nurse practitioner or the Thunder Bay District Health Unit at (807) 625-5971.

How do I ensure that my child receives this vaccine at school?

Ensure you read and understand the information provided to you by your local public health department. Sign and return the consent form to your child's school before the scheduled clinic date.

Contact your local public health unit for additional information.