



Meningococcal disease

Get the facts on School Vaccines

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease (MD) is caused by bacteria called *Neisseria meningitidis*. About 10% of people carry the bacteria in the back of their throat or nose, although most people never get sick.

MD makes the lining of the brain and spinal cord swollen (meningitis). It can also cause a very bad infection of the blood.

How does MD spread?

MD is spread through direct contact with the spit or mucous of an infected person when kissing or when sharing eating utensils, drinking glasses, water bottles or cigarettes.

It is **NOT** spread by being in the same room or breathing the same air as someone who has MD.

How would you know you have MD?

Symptoms of MD can develop within a few hours or several days and can include:

- High fever
- Very bad headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea and often vomiting
- Rash

8 to 15 % of people infected with MD become very sick and die. It can also cause life-long problems like hearing loss, brain damage or loss of a limb (amputation).

You can protect yourself:

- Get the vaccine against MD
- Do not share personal items such as eating utensils, drinking glasses or water bottles
- Wash your hands often with soap and water

About the vaccine

- **Menactra[®]** is a one dose vaccine
- It protects against four strains of meningococcal bacteria (A, C, Y and W135)
- It is recommended for young people, even if you got a dose as a baby or young child
- You cannot get MD from the vaccine
- It can be given the same day as the hepatitis B and human papillomavirus vaccines

How is Menactra[®] different than other meningococcal vaccines?

There are several types of meningococcal vaccines used, including Meningitech[™], Neis-Vac C[®] and Menjugate C[®]. These protect against **one** type of bacteria that causes MD.

If you already received any of these vaccines, we recommend that you get **Menactra[®]** because this vaccine has added protection against three more strains of bacteria.

Are there any side effects from Menactra[®]?

Most common	Less common	Very rare and serious
Redness, pain and/or swelling at the site, especially during the first 24 hours	Muscle aches, headache and/or slight fever	Trouble breathing, swelling of the face or mouth, hives
Treatment: Apply ice to the area where you got the vaccine and/or take acetaminophen (eg. Tylenol [™]) to ease these side effects		Nurses at the clinic are trained to treat severe side effects

Is Menactra[®] free?

- Yes! It is free for **grade 7** students if they get this vaccine at a school immunization clinic
- If you get it from your health care provider, you will have to pay (about \$140); some drug plans cover the cost

You should **NOT** get the vaccine at a school immunization clinic if you:

- Have a fever over 37.5 degrees Celsius
- Are allergic to diphtheria toxoid or other vaccine components
- Had a previous bad reaction to a vaccine (consult your health care provider)
- If you are pregnant (consult your health care provider)

The day you get the shot, you should:

- Wear a short sleeved or loose shirt
- Eat breakfast and/or lunch
- Bring an extra juice or snack to school