

Meningococcal Disease Vaccine Information

What is meningococcal disease?

- It is caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*
- It is a serious illness that can cause meningitis (inflammation of the tissue around the brain and spinal cord) or infection of the blood
- It can cause death or severe long-term health problems, including hearing loss or brain damage
- Symptoms can include sudden onset of fever, severe headache, a stiff neck, nausea, vomiting and sometimes a rash
- Serious illness can develop quickly and 10 per cent can die from the disease

How does meningococcal disease spread?

The bacteria can spread from person to person through direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat of an infected individual, kissing or using items that have been in contact with an infected person's mouth, such as cups, water bottles, straws, cigarettes, food and utensils, musical instruments, toothbrushes or lipstick.

How can meningococcal disease be prevented?

The best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to get vaccinated.

More about the meningococcal A, C, Y, W-135 (Menactra®) vaccine

Menactra® provides protection against four serogroups (strains) that cause meningococcal disease; A, C, Y, W-135. It is required to attend school in Ontario for students ages 12 and over and is available at no cost in grade 7. Other meningococcal vaccines are offered to children at younger ages (e.g. NeisVac-C® or Menjugate®) which protect against type C meningococcal disease only, and does not offer protection from strains A, Y, or W-135.

If your child received a dose of Menactra® in the past (between that ages of one and five), another dose is not required for school attendance but it is safe and recommended for your child to still receive the grade 7 dose.

If your child misses being vaccinated in grade 7, they can receive Menactra® vaccine until the end of grade 12 at a York Region Public Health community immunization clinic. Visit york.ca/immunization for clinic information.

Who should NOT get this vaccine at school and should consult their health care provider?

- Those who have had a severe reaction to a vaccine
- Those who have an illness or take any medication that weakens the immune system
- Those who have a severe allergy to diphtheria toxoid
- Those who have received a meningococcal conjugate vaccine within the past 4 weeks

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

- Some people may experience headache, fatigue, redness, pain and swelling at the injection site that may last about a day. Apply ice to the site and/or take a non-aspirin pain reliever to help minimize pain and/or swelling
- Students are observed for a minimum of 15 minutes after their vaccination to ensure there are no immediate side effects. Anyone who experiences serious health effects after they leave the clinic should consult their health care provider and notify York Region Public Health

PUBLIC HEALTH

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york.ca/immunizations

