

Meningococcal C-Conjugate Vaccine: 12-year-olds (grade 7) and 15- to 19-year-olds

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

What is invasive meningococcal disease (IMD)?

IMD is a serious disease caused by a specific strain of bacteria, *Neisseria meningitidis*. There are several strains (serogroups) of the bacteria that cause IMD; serogroups A, B, C, W-135, and Y are the most common.

How do you get invasive meningococcal disease?

The bacteria that cause IMD can live in the body, in particular, at the back of the nose and throat without causing symptoms. Up to 10 per cent of the population carry the bacteria at any time, however, most people never develop active disease (IMD). The bacteria are spread through droplets in the air from coughing or sneezing. Bacteria from the saliva of an infected person can be spread through kissing or when common items are shared, like drinks (water bottles, straws), cigarettes, toothbrushes or lipstick.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal infection?

IMD often affects previously healthy people of all ages; you can become extremely ill very quickly.

IMD can lead to serious infections of the blood (septicaemia), and the covering of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis).

Symptoms of blood infection may include fever, chills, rash, low blood pressure and dark purple spots on the arms and legs. Symptoms of meningitis may include fever, headache, confusion and stiff neck.

What is the meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine?

The meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine protects you against illness due to invasive meningococcal disease (serogroup C) and its complications.

What is serogroup C?

Serogroup C is a specific strain or serogroup of IMD (IMD-C) and can result in severe long-term health complications or death. Someone who has been infected with IMD-C disease may develop skin scars, hearing loss and kidney problems or may require limb amputations.

Will this vaccine protect against other serogroups of IMD?

This vaccine only provides protection against IMD 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).

Why is the meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine important?

Serogroup C has been almost exclusively responsible for localized clusters or outbreaks of IMD in schools and communities. In Ontario, many of the cases of IMD-C are in adolescents and young adults.

Who is eligible to receive the publicly funded vaccine?

Anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has IMD-C is at greatest risk of IMD-C infection. Close contacts are already eligible to receive the meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine free of charge.

The publicly funded vaccine is available for 12-year-olds (generally in grade 7) and 15- to 19-year-olds. People of all ages with high-risk medical conditions that put them at an increased risk of IMD are eligible to receive the vaccine.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Anyone who has allergies to the vaccine or any component to the vaccine, or anyone who has had an anaphylactic reaction to a prior dose of the vaccine should not get the shot.

Safety in pregnancy has not been documented.

You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your parents, doctor/nurse practitioner or local public health unit.

Are there side effects from the vaccine?

Most reactions tend to be mild and include soreness, redness, itching and/or rash where the needle was given. Other side effects such as headache, dizziness, and nausea may occur.

Severe reactions are rare.

Please report any side effects or severe vaccine reactions to your parents and/or doctor/nurse practitioner or local public health unit.

Contact your doctor/nurse practitioner if you experience 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 the vaccine.

Who should I talk to if I have any questions?

For more information please contact your doctor/nurse practitioner or your local public health unit.

How do I keep track of my immunizations?

After you receive any immunization, make sure your personal immunization record (sometimes called the Yellow Card) is updated. Keep it in a safe place! You may be asked to show this record of immunization when you register for college/university.

Find out more

For information about health services and resources:

www.health.gov.on.ca

For consumer-friendly health tips and information:

www.HealthyOntario.com

INFOline: 1-877-234-4343 toll free in Ontario

TTY: 1-800-387-5559

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000

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