

Meningococcal Quadrivalent Vaccines

Immunization has saved more lives in Canada in the last 50 years than any other health measure.

What are meningococcal quadrivalent vaccines?

Meningococcal quadrivalent vaccines protect against 4 types of meningococcal bacteria: types A, C, Y and W-135. There are 2 types of quadrivalent vaccines, a polysaccharide vaccine (Menomune®) and conjugate vaccines (Menactra® and Menveo™). The conjugate vaccines are more commonly used because they provide longer lasting protection against disease. These vaccines are approved by Health Canada.

The meningococcal quadrivalent vaccines are not part of the publicly funded routine schedule of childhood immunizations in B.C. but a vaccine against meningococcal C disease is. For information on the routine meningococcal C vaccine for children, see HealthLinkBC File #23a [Meningococcal C Conjugate \(Men-C\) Vaccine.](#)

Who should get the vaccine?

Some children and adults have health concerns or medical conditions that put them at high risk of getting sick with meningococcal bacteria. The vaccine is provided free to these people, including those who have:

- no spleen, or a spleen that is not working properly
- immune system disorders including complement, properdin or factor D deficiencies, or primary antibody deficiency
- an islet cell or solid organ transplant or those who are waiting for one
- had a stem cell transplant
- been in close contact with a person with meningococcal A, Y or W-135 disease, or who are at risk of infection with these during an outbreak in B.C.

The vaccine is also recommended, but not provided free, for the following people:

- Laboratory workers routinely exposed to meningococcal bacteria
- Military personnel
- Those living or travelling in a high risk area for meningococcal disease.

For information on high risk travel areas and access to the vaccine, contact a travel clinic or public health unit.

The vaccine is usually given as 1 dose or shot. Sometimes, a second dose may be necessary. Your health care provider can provide you with this information.

People who are not eligible for the free vaccine but want to be protected against meningococcal A, C, Y and W-135 strains of the disease can purchase the quadrivalent vaccine at travel clinics and some pharmacies.

It is important to keep a record of all immunizations received.

Benefits of the Vaccine

The vaccine is the best way to protect against meningococcal infection, a serious and sometimes fatal disease.

When you get vaccinated, you help protect others as well.

What are possible reactions after the vaccine?

Vaccines are very safe. It is much safer to get the vaccine than to get meningococcal disease. Common reactions to the vaccine may include soreness, redness and swelling where the shot was given. Headache, fatigue, diarrhea, irritability, loss of appetite or fever may also occur within 24 hours after getting the vaccine.

These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.

Acetaminophen or Tylenol® can be given for fever or soreness. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this happens after you leave the clinic, call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number. This reaction can be treated and occurs in less than 1 in a million people who get the vaccine.

It is important to always report serious or unexpected reactions to your health care provider.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if you or your child have:

- had a life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of any meningococcal vaccine, or any component of the vaccine, or to latex
- a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), which is a rare condition that can result in weakness and paralysis of the body's muscles. It most commonly occurs after infection, but in rare cases can also occur after some vaccines.

What is meningococcal infection?

Meningococcal infection is caused by a germ or bacteria. Meningococcal infection due to types A, C, Y and W-135 is very rare in B.C.; since 2009 there have been less than 10 cases per year in total. Although rare, it can cause serious and life-threatening infections including meningitis, an infection of the lining that covers the brain, and septicemia, an infection of the blood. For every 100 people who get sick, up to 10-15 will die even if they receive treatment. Permanent

complications of infection include brain damage, deafness, and loss of limbs.

Meningococcal infection is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or close face-to-face contact. It can also be spread through saliva or spit. This can occur through activities such as kissing or sharing of food, drinks, cigarettes, lipsticks, water bottles, mouth guards used for sports, or mouthpieces of musical instruments.

Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents or guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. Efforts are first made to seek parental/guardian or representative consent prior to immunization. However, children under the age of 19, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risk of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call 8-1-1 for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

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