



MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



1. What is Meningococcal disease ?

- **Meningococcal disease is a serious illness, caused by bacteria.**
- Meningitis is an infection of fluid surrounding the brain and the spinal cord. Meningococcal disease also causes blood infections.
- About 2,600 people get Meningococcal disease each year in the U.S. **10-15% of these people die**, in spite of treatment with antibiotics. Of those who live, **another 11-19% loses their arms or legs, become deaf, have problems with their nervous systems, become mentally retarded, or suffer seizures or strokes.**
- Anyone can get Meningococcal disease. But it is most common in infants less than one year of age and people with certain medical conditions.
- Meningococcal infections can be treated with drugs such as Penicillin. **Still, about 1 out of every ten people who get the disease die from it**, and many others are affected for life. This is why preventing the disease through use of Meningococcal vaccine is important for people at highest risk.

2. Meningococcal vaccine:

Meningococcal vaccines cannot prevent all types of the disease. But they do protect many people who might become sick if they didn't get the vaccine.

3. Who should get Meningococcal vaccine and when ?

The vaccination is recommended for all children at their routine preadolescent visit (11-12 years of age). For those who have never gotten a Meningococcal vaccine previously, a dose is recommended at high school entry.

Other adolescents who want to decrease their risk of Meningococcal disease can also get the vaccine.

Meningococcal vaccine is also recommended for other people at increased risk for Meningococcal disease:

- Anyone traveling to, or living in, a part of the world where Meningococcal disease is common, such as parts of Africa and Asia.
- People who might have been exposed to meningitis during an outbreak.
- Military and police recruits.
- College freshmen living in dormitories.
- Anyone who has a damaged spleen, or whose spleen has been removed.
- Anyone who has Terminal Complement Component Deficiency (an immune system disorder).

How many doses ?

- People 2 years of age and older should get 1 dose.

4. Some people should not get Meningococcal vaccine or should wait:

- Anyone who has ever had a severe (life-threatening) **allergic reaction to a previous dose** of either Meningococcal vaccine should not get another dose.
- Anyone who has a severe (life threatening) allergy to **any vaccine component** should not get the vaccine. Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies.
- Anyone who is moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled should probably wait until they recover. Ask your doctor or nurse. **People with a mild illness can usually get the vaccine.**
- Anyone who has ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome should talk with their doctor before getting the

vaccination.

5. What are the risks from Meningococcal vaccine ?

A vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. ***The risk of Meningococcal vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.***

Mild problems:

- Up to about half of people who get Meningococcal vaccines have mild side effects, such as redness or pain where the shot was given. If these problems occur, they usually last for 1 or 2 days.
- A small percentage of people who receive the vaccine develop a fever.

Severe problems:

- Serious allergic reactions, within a few minutes to a few hours of the shot, ***are very rare.***

6. What if there is a moderate or severe reaction ?

What should I look for ?

- Any unusual condition, such as a serious allergic reaction, high fever or unusual behavior. Serious allergic reactions are extremely rare with any vaccine. If one were to occur, it would be within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot. Signs can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

What should I do ?

- Call a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- Tell your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.

7. How can I learn more ?

- Ask your doctor or nurse. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Contact the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
Visit CDC websites at: www.cdc.gov/nip