

## 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. These vaccines are approved by Health Canada.

Meningococcal quadrivalent vaccines are not part of the routine schedule of childhood immunizations. For information on the routine meningococcal C vaccine for children, see [HealthLink BC 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
- Students attending college or university, particularly students living on campus
- 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 one dose or shot. Sometimes, a second dose may be necessary. Your public health nurse or doctor can provide you with this information.

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.

### 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.

**Report serious or unexpected reactions to your public health nurse or doctor.**

### Who should not get the vaccine?

Speak with a public health nurse or doctor 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.

### What is meningococcal infection?

Meningococcal infection is caused by a germ or bacteria. 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 15 will die. 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 HealthLink BC File topics, visit [www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm) or your local public health unit.

Click on [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://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.

Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.



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