

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. The vaccines are either polysaccharide or conjugate vaccines. The conjugate vaccine used in B.C. provides longer lasting protection against disease. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

Who should get the meningococcal quadrivalent conjugate vaccine?

The vaccine is provided free to children in grade 9.

The vaccine is also provided free to children and adults at high risk of meningococcal disease, including those who have:

- No spleen, or a spleen that is not working properly
- Immune system disorders including complement, properdin, factor D or primary antibody deficiencies
- 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 disease, or who are determined by public health to be at risk of infection with these during an outbreak in B.C.

The vaccine is 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 contact a travel clinic.

The vaccine is usually given as 1 dose. Some people may need additional doses of the vaccine. Speak with your health care provider to find out if you need more doses and when you should get them.

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

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

What are the benefits of the vaccine?

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

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

What are the 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 vaccine was given. Headache, muscle soreness, fatigue, chills, fever and nausea may also occur after getting the vaccine. These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.

Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (e.g. Advil®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) should not be given to anyone under 18 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome.

*Ibuprofen should not be given to children under 6 months of age without first speaking to your health care provider.

For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye syndrome](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is an extremely rare possibility, less than 1 in a million, of a life-threatening allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. This may include hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips. If this reaction occurs, your health care provider is prepared to treat it. Emergency treatment includes administration of epinephrine (adrenaline) and transfer by ambulance to the nearest emergency department. If symptoms develop after you leave the clinic, call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number.

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 part of the meningococcal quadrivalent conjugate vaccine.

There is no need to delay getting immunized because of a cold or other mild illness. However, if you have concerns speak with your health care provider.

What is meningococcal infection?

Meningococcal infection is caused by bacteria. Meningococcal infection due to types A, C, Y and W is very rare in B.C. 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 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. 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. 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 information on mature minor consent, see [HealthLinkBC File #119 The infants act, mature minor consent and immunization](#).



BC Centre for Disease Control
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