

Meningococcal B (Men-B) Vaccine

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

What is the Men-B vaccine?

The Men-B vaccine protects against infection by one of the most common types of meningococcal bacteria, type B. The vaccine is approved by Health Canada.

The Men-B vaccine is not part of the publicly funded routine schedule of immunizations in B.C. However, a vaccine for 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?

In B.C., the Men-B vaccine is provided free to those 2 months to 55 years of age who have been in close contact with a case of meningococcal B disease.

The vaccine is recommended, but not provided free, for those who are at risk of meningococcal B infection due to certain medical conditions including:

- no spleen or a spleen that is not working properly; or
- immune system disorders including complement, properdin, factor D deficiencies, or primary antibody deficiency.

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

- laboratory workers routinely exposed to meningococcal bacteria;
- military personnel; and
- those traveling to an area where the risk of meningococcal B disease is high.

For information on high risk travel areas contact a travel clinic.

If you want to be protected against meningococcal B disease, you may purchase the vaccine at some travel clinics and pharmacies.

The vaccine is given by injection as a series of 2, 3 or 4 doses. The number of doses depends on how old you are when the immunization series is started. Speak with your health care provider for more information.

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

What are the benefits of getting the vaccine?

The vaccine provides long-term protection against meningococcal B infection, a serious and sometimes fatal disease.

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 include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Fever, crankiness, sleepiness, muscle aches and headache may also occur. These reactions are usually mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.

Reactions, including fever, are more common in children under 2 years of age if the Men-B vaccine is given with other routine childhood vaccines.

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.

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 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 it 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 Men-B vaccine?

Speak with your health care provider if you or your child has had a life threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine, or any component of the vaccine including kanamycin, or to latex.

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 B infection?

Meningococcal B infection is caused by bacteria called meningococcal type B. 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. Permanent complications of infection include brain damage and deafness. About 1 in 20 people who get sick may die.

Meningococcal infection is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or close face-to-face contact. It can also be spread through saliva. Babies and young children can become sick through sharing soothers, bottles or toys used by other children. Older children and adults can become sick through activities such as kissing, or sharing food, drinks, cigarettes, lipstick, water

bottles, and 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 information on immunizations visit ImmunizeBC at www.immunizebc.ca.

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.

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



ImmunizeBC



BC Centre for Disease Control
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