

# Meningococcal Conjugate A, C, Y and W-135 Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives compared to any other medical intervention. Vaccines help the immune system recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause serious diseases.

## Most meningococcal diseases are vaccine preventable.

- This vaccine protects against 4 types of meningococcal bacteria: A, C, Y and W-135.
- **Meningococcal diseases** are caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria and are very contagious, serious, and life-threatening.
- The bacteria cause meningitis (an infection of the lining that covers the brain) and septicemia (an infection of the blood).
- Finger, toe, arm or leg amputations, permanent hearing loss, permanent brain damage and seizures may occur.
- Most cases occur in children, adolescents, and seniors.
- Even with antibiotic treatment, 1 out of 10 people who have meningococcal disease die.

## What are the symptoms of meningococcal diseases?

- Symptoms of meningococcal disease start within days after contact with the bacteria.
- Symptoms progress **very rapidly** and include fever, severe headache, joint pain, nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light and a stiff neck.
- A tiny reddish-purple or bruise-like rash on the body and decreased alertness occur soon afterwards.
- Septic shock (severe drop in blood pressure) can occur within 24 hours.
- **It is important to see a doctor if you or your child have the symptoms listed above.**
- Within 24 hours of taking antibiotics, people are no longer infectious to others.

## How are meningococcal bacteria spread?

- Through coughing and sneezing, close face-to-face contact, in saliva when kissing and by sharing drinks.
- Many people carry *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria in their nose and throat but do not become sick.

## How can this disease be prevented?

- Be immunized. When you / your child is immunized, you help protect others as well.
- Practice good hygiene (e.g., handwashing).
- Cover your mouth when coughing and your nose and mouth when sneezing to prevent direct contact with droplets from the nose or throat.
- Do not share food, drinks, cigarettes, straws, dishes, musical instrument mouthpieces, lip care products, water bottles, mouth guards used for sports, baby bottles, soothers or toys.
- There are other vaccines that prevent meningococcal disease. Meningococcal ACYW-135 vaccine will not protect against other meningococcal bacterial types.

## Who can get this vaccine for free?

- Adults younger than 22 years old if they were not previously immunized.
- Individuals 2 months of age and older who have been identified as 'close contacts' of persons who have meningococcal A, C, Y or W-135 disease.
- Individuals 2 months of age and older with the following medical conditions:
  - Have no spleen, a spleen that is not working properly or sickle cell disease.
  - Have acquired complement deficiency.
  - Have a congenital immune system disorder (including complement, properdin, factor D deficiency, primary antibody deficiencies).
  - Are solid organ transplant candidates or recipients.
  - Are islet cell transplant candidates or recipients.
  - Had a hematopoietic stem cell transplant.
  - Received a cochlear (inner ear) implant or are waiting for one.
  - Have a cerebrospinal fluid leak or hydrocephaly.
  - Children up to and including 17 years old with HIV.

## Who should not get this vaccine?

- Persons who have a serious acute illness, with or without a fever, should delay immunizations.
- People who had a serious or life-threatening reaction to a previous dose of a meningococcal vaccine, or any components of the vaccine.

## What are common reactions to this vaccine?

- **Vaccines are very safe and effective. It is much safer to get this vaccine than to get meningococcal disease.**
- Temporary pain, redness and swelling where the needle was given.
- Headache, tiredness, diarrhea, irritability, loss of appetite or fever.
- These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.
- Only treat a fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) **if** your child is uncomfortable, refusing fluids and not sleeping.

Use **Acetaminophen** (all ages; Tylenol®, Tempra®) or **Ibuprofen** (6 months & older; Advil®, Motrin®) to treat fevers and pain. **Never give ASA** (Aspirin®) to children younger than 18 years old because of the serious risk of Reye's 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. This reaction can be treated and occurs in less than one in one million people who get the vaccine. **If this happens after you leave the clinic, get medical attention or call 911 right away.**

## Who should you report reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor, nurse practitioner or 811 as soon as possible.

## Talk to a public health nurse:

- If you have questions or concerns about you or your child's reaction to an immunization.
- If you had to take your child to a doctor, a hospital or to a health centre with a symptom that might be related to immunizations.

## What does this vaccine contain?

**NIMENRIX™** contains *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup A polysaccharide, *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup C polysaccharide, *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup W-135 polysaccharide, *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup Y polysaccharide, sucrose, trometamol, sodium chloride, water for injection. Thimerosal-free, preservative-free and latex-free. Contains no adjuvants.

**Menactra®** contains meningococcal A, C, Y and W -135 polysaccharides, diphtheria toxoid protein, sodium chloride, sodium phosphate (dibasic, anhydrous), sodium phosphate (monobasic), and water for injection. Thimerosal-free, preservative-free and latex-free. Contains no adjuvants.

**Menveo™** contains meningococcal A, C, Y and W-135 oligosaccharides, diphtheria CRM197 protein, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, sodium chloride, sodium dihydrogen phosphate monohydrate, di-sodium hydrogen phosphate bihydrate, sucrose, water for injection. Thimerosal-free, preservative-free and latex-free. Contains no adjuvants.

## Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians discuss consent for immunization with their children. Efforts are first made to get parental/guardian consent for immunizations. However, children at least 13 years of age up to and including 17 years of age, who are able to understand the benefits and possible reactions for each vaccine and the risks of not getting immunized, can legally consent to or refuse immunizations in Saskatchewan by providing mature minor informed consent to a healthcare provider.

Provincial immunization fact sheets are available at [www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/immunize).

**For more information, contact your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner, HealthLine online or by calling 811.**

**References:** [Canadian Immunization Guide](#). Product monographs: Menactra (2017), Menveo (2020), NIMENRIX (2023).