

Meningococcal B Vaccine

Vaccines have saved more lives in Canada in the last 60 years than any other medical intervention. Vaccines help your immune system to recognize and fight bacteria and viruses that cause diseases.

Meningococcal B disease is vaccine preventable.

- **Meningococcal B disease**, caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* type B bacteria, is a **very contagious, serious and life-threatening disease** that causes:
 - Meningitis (an infection of the lining that covers the brain).
 - Septicemia (an infection of the blood).
- Most cases occur in children and adolescents.
- Complications include limb amputations, permanent hearing loss, permanent brain damage, seizures and skin scarring.
- Even with antibiotic treatment, 10-15% of people who have meningococcal B disease die.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal B disease?

- Symptoms of meningococcal B disease occur within 2 to 10 days after contact with the bacteria.
- Symptoms progress **very rapidly** and include fever, chills, tiredness, and irritability.
- A severe headache, stiff neck and/or a tiny reddish-purple or bruise-like rash on the body occurs soon afterwards.
- **It is important to see a doctor if you or your child has symptoms.**
- Within 24 hours of taking antibiotics, people are no longer infectious to others.

How are meningococcal B bacteria spread?

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

How can meningococcal B disease be prevented?

- Be immunized. When you / your child are immunized, you help protect others as well.
- Practice good hygiene (e.g. handwashing).
- Avoid 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 many different vaccines that can prevent meningococcal disease. Meningococcal B vaccine does not protect you against other *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria types (such as A, C, Y and W-135).

Who can get this vaccine for free?

- Individuals 2 months of age and older who have been identified as 'close contacts' of persons who have meningococcal B disease.
- Children up to and including 17 years of age who have HIV.
- Individuals 2 months of age and older with the following medical conditions:
 - Acquired complement deficiency
 - Asplenia (congenital, acquired or functional)
 - Congenital immunodeficiency
 - Sickle cell disease
 - Solid organ transplant recipients or candidates
 - Islet cell transplant recipients or candidates
 - Stem cell transplant recipients

Who should not get this vaccine?

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

What are common reactions to this vaccine?

- **Vaccines are very safe and effective. It is much safer to get this vaccine than to get this serious and life-threatening disease.**
- Temporary soreness, tenderness, swelling and redness at the injection site.
- Fever, loss of appetite, sleepiness, irritability, unusual crying in young children, headache, vomiting, diarrhea, headache or skin rash.
- These reactions are mild and generally last 1 to 2 days.
- Extensive swelling of the vaccinated limb, blisters at or around the injection site, and/or a hard lump at the injection site (which may last for more than one month) have also been reported.
- High fever, vomiting and seizures are uncommon.
- Only treat a fever (at least 6 to 8 hours after immunization) **if** your child is uncomfortable, refusing fluids and not sleeping.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) may be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin) must NOT be given to anyone younger than 18 years old because of 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 911 or the local emergency number.** This reaction can be treated, and occurs in less than one in one million people.

Who should you report reactions to?

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

Talk to your public health nurse if:

- You have questions or concerns about you or your child's reaction to a vaccine.
- You or your child had to go to a doctor, hospital or health center with side effects that might be related to getting a vaccine.

What does this vaccine contain?

BEXSERO[®] contains recombinant *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup B NHBA fusion protein; recombinant *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup B NadA protein; recombinant *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup B fHbp fusion protein; and outer membrane vesicles (OMV) from *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup B strain NZ98/254 measured as amount of total protein containing the PorA P1.4, aluminum hydroxide, histidine, sodium chloride, sucrose, water for injection and may contain traces of kanamycin. Thimerosal-free. The tip cap of the syringe may contain natural rubber latex.

Mature Minor Consent

It is recommended that parents/guardians and their children discuss consent for immunization. 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.

For more information, contact 811, your local public health office, your physician, nurse practitioner OR HealthLine at 811.

Reference: BEXSERO[®] product monograph (2022).