

FACT SHEET

Meningococcal (A, C, Y, W-135) Vaccine for Students

The meningococcal immunization is required for school attendance in Ontario. Funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, this vaccine is offered free to all grade 7 students. The meningococcal vaccine protects against the meningitis strains A, C, Y, and W-135. It is different than the meningitis vaccine usually given on or after a child's first birthday.

What is meningococcal disease and how do you get it?

- Commonly known as meningococcal meningitis, it is a bacterial infection of the blood and organs, or lining of the brain and spinal cord.
- Although rare, 1 in 10 people infected with meningitis will die, while 11-19% of survivors will have a permanent disability such as hearing loss, brain damage, or limb loss.
- It's easily spread by sharing food, cutlery, drinking containers, kissing, coughing, sneezing or other contact where saliva is passed from person to person.

What are the symptoms of meningitis and can it be prevented?

- Early symptoms include headache, fever, and tiredness, then progresses to stiff neck, sensitivity to light, dizziness, red, blotchy rash, sleepiness, and coma.
- Meningitis can start quickly and become very serious or result in death within 12 to 24 hours.
- The meningococcal vaccine provides effective protection against four types of meningococcal bacteria (A, C, Y, and W-135).

What to expect after receiving the meningococcal vaccine?

- The meningococcal vaccine is very safe. It is common to have some redness, swelling, or pain at the site where the needle was given. Some students may develop a headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and on rare occasions, have nausea and/or vomiting. It is very rare for a severe

reaction to occur. Difficulty with breathing, swelling of the mouth or face, hives, a rash or seizure/convulsions require immediate medical care. Concerns about your child's symptoms should be reported to your physician/nurse practitioner and the Health Unit.

What's in the meningococcal vaccine?

Contents	Where else are they found?
Pieces of meningococcal bacteria	Meningococcal bacteria
Diphtheria toxoid	Other childhood vaccines
Sodium chloride	Human body, table salt
Sodium phosphate	Laxatives

Who should not receive the vaccine?

- Anyone with a previous diagnosis of Guillain-Barré Syndrome.
- Those who are febrile the day of the clinic should wait until feeling better.
- Anyone with a weakened immune system due to illness, medication, or therapy should delay receiving the vaccine.
- Anyone with an allergy to any part of the vaccine.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, consult your healthcare provider.

How can I prepare my child?



Talk to your child about the vaccine.



Review helpful ways to deal with fear or anxiety (count to ten, look away from needle, focus on breathing)



Make sure your child eats on clinic day.



Make sure your child wears a short sleeve shirt on clinic day.