

Meningococcal Vaccination – What Parents Should Know

Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal meningitis and certain bloodstream infections can be caused by a bacterium called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Infections caused by this bacterium are serious and can quickly turn critical, leading to brain damage, hearing loss, and even death. This bacterium is spread from person to person by sharing respiratory or throat secretions. This typically occurs during close contact, such as kissing or sharing eating utensils, or through persons living in close quarters, such as dormitories. Meningococcal vaccines are the best way to protect teens from getting meningococcal disease.

The vaccines that protect against it

There are two types of meningococcal vaccine available in the United States to protect against these infections. The meningococcal conjugate vaccine, also referred to as MenACWY (or MCV4), protects against meningococcal serogroups A, C, W and Y. The meningococcal serogroup B vaccine, also known as MenB, protects against serogroup B. Since the MCV4 and MenB vaccines protect against different serogroups of the bacterium, they are not interchangeable. It is necessary to receive a complete series of both vaccines for protection against these 5 serogroups of meningococcal bacteria. Neither type of vaccine contains live meningococcal bacteria.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination of all children with the MenACWY vaccine (Menactra or Menveo) at 11 or 12 years of age. A booster dose at age 16 is also recommended to provide ongoing protection from the disease after high school.

The CDC also recommends that a MenB vaccine (Bexsero or Trumenba) 2-dose series may be administered to persons 16 through 23 years of age. Your child's healthcare provider may make a recommendation regarding the MenB vaccine based on your child's needs. Bexsero and Trumenba are not interchangeable. The series must be started and completed with the same brand of vaccine.

Illinois Requirements vs. Recommendations

Required: MenACWY

- 6th graders must show 1 dose of MenACWY on or after the 11th birthday at school entry
- 12th graders must show 2 doses of MenACWY at school entry. The 2nd dose must be on or after the 16th birthday
 - If the 1st dose is given \geq 16th birthday, then only 1 dose is required for entry to 12th grade

Recommended: MenB

- For those who are not in a risk group:
 - Teens and young adults ages 16-23 years who wish to be vaccinated
 - The preferred age for vaccination with MenB is 16-18 years
- For those with underlying medication conditions or other risk factors:
 - For those ages 10 years or older with
 - Persistent complement component deficiencies
 - Anatomic or functional asplenia, including sickle cell disease
 - For those ages 10 years or older who
 - Are present during outbreaks caused by serogroup B
 - Have prolonged increased risk for exposure