

Meningococcal Disease Is Serious...

Make sure your child is protected!

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease can be a life-threatening illness. It is caused by bacteria that can infect the blood, brain, and spinal cord. People often call it meningitis.

How do you catch it?

Meningococcus bacteria are spread through upper respiratory droplets, like saliva (kissing, living in close quarters). You can catch meningitis from a person who looks healthy.

Is meningococcal disease serious?

Ask your child's healthcare provider if your child is up to date for all vaccines!

Yes! Meningococcal disease may respond to antibiotics, but quick medical attention is extremely important. Even with proper treatment, 10–15% of people with meningococcal disease die. Of the people who survive, as many as 20% suffer from some serious complication, such as loss of an arm or leg, brain damage, or permanent hearing loss.



Meningitis can cause shock, coma, and death within hours of the first symptom.

Is my child at risk?

The disease most often strikes older teens and young adults. If your child travels internationally to certain countries or has certain medical conditions, he or she may also be at increased risk.

How can I protect my child from meningococcal disease?



Vaccination is the best way to prevent meningitis.

There are 2 meningococcal vaccines for children and teens: MenACWY and MenB. Preteens and teens need protection from meningitis. MenACWY is given to all preteens at age 11–12. A second dose is needed at 16. A MenB series can also be given to teens and young adults starting at age 16.

Children with certain medical conditions should also get vaccinated and may need boosters. Talk to your child's healthcare provider about these vaccines.

► For more information, visit www.vaccineinformation.org

For other vaccine handouts in this series, visit www.immunize.org/handouts/easy-to-read-q-and-a.asp

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