

Meningococcal Vaccines

What You Need to Know

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis.

Hojas de Información Sobre Vacunas están disponibles en Español y en muchos otros idiomas.

Visite <http://www.immunize.org/vis>

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What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a serious bacterial illness. It is a leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children 2 through 18 years old in the United States. Meningitis is an infection of the covering of the brain and the spinal cord.

Meningococcal disease also causes blood infections.

About 1,000 – 1,200 people get meningococcal disease each year in the U.S. Even when they are treated with antibiotics, 10-15% of these people die. Of those who live, another 11%-19% lose their arms or legs, have problems with their nervous systems, become deaf, or

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Some people should not get meningococcal vaccine or should wait.

- Anyone who has ever had a severe (life-threatening) allergic reaction to a previous dose of MCV4 or MPSV4 vaccine should not get another dose of either vaccine.
- Anyone who has a severe (life threatening) allergy to any vaccine component should not get the vaccine. Tell your doctor if you have any severe allergies.
- Anyone who is moderately or severely ill at the time the shot is scheduled should probably wait until they recover. Ask your doctor. People with a mild illness can usually get the vaccine.
- Meningococcal vaccines may be given to pregnant women. MCV4 is a fairly new vaccine and has not been studied in pregnant women as much as MPSV4 has. It should be used only if clearly needed. The manufacturers of MCV4 maintain pregnancy registries for women who are vaccinated while pregnant.

Except for children with sickle cell disease or without a working spleen, meningococcal vaccines may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

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What are the risks from meningococcal vaccines?

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of meningococcal vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

Brief fainting spells and related symptoms (such as jerking or seizure-like movements) can follow a vaccination. They happen most often with adolescents, and they can result in falls and injuries.

Sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes after getting the shot – especially if you feel faint – can help prevent these injuries.

Mild problems

As many as half the people who get meningococcal vaccines have mild side effects, such as redness or pain where the shot was given.

If these problems occur, they usually last for 1 or 2 days. They are more common after MCV4 than after MPSV4.

A small percentage of people who receive the vaccine develop a mild fever.

Severe problems

Serious allergic reactions, within a few minutes to a few hours of the shot, are very rare.

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What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

What should I look for?

Any unusual condition, such as a severe allergic reaction or a high fever. If a severe allergic reaction occurred, it would be within a few minutes to an hour after the shot. Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include **difficulty breathing, weakness, hoarseness or wheezing, a fast heart beat, hives, dizziness, paleness, or swelling of the throat.**

What should I do?

- Call a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- Tell your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- Ask your provider to report the reaction by fi

