



Meningococcal Disease

What Is Group C meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is an infection caused by a type of bacteria called meningococcus. This bacteria can cause serious infections of the blood (“bacteremia” or “septicemia”) or of the covering of the brain and spinal cord (“meningitis”). Group C is one of the more common types (“strains”) of this bacteria.

Two groups of people have the highest risk of having a serious meningococcal infection:

- children under the age of 5
- adolescents and young adults

Group C bacteria cause about 100 cases of serious illness in Canada every year. Most are children under age 5 or teenagers.

About 10% (1 in 10) of people who get the infection die. Others become deaf or paralyzed. Some have kidney damage. Some have scars.

Can Group C infections be treated or prevented?

Yes. Group C infections can be treated with antibiotics. Unfortunately, complications and deaths still occur. Vaccination is the best way to prevent further cases.

Who should receive the new vaccine?

According to Health Canada, the vaccine should be routinely given to:

- all children over one year
- adolescents and young adults

People who live with have close contact with a person who has a Group C infection should also be vaccinated.

Who should not receive the new vaccine?

The vaccine should not be given to people who are allergic to any of its ingredients, people who have had previous reactions to immunization or pregnant women.

Your doctor may delay the shot if your child is ill on the day of the planned vaccination.

Is the new vaccine effective and safe?

The vaccine is very effective. It prevents serious group C disease in at least 90% of people vaccinated. The vaccine is also very safe. Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site may occur. These problems usually clear up within 2 to 3 days. Irritability, fever, headache, decreased appetite, diarrhea and vomiting may also occur.

More serious side-effects such as allergic reactions (anaphylaxis, difficulty breathing, hives) are rare.

How can I learn more?

Call your local health centre and talk to your nurse/doctor. You can also find reliable information on the following Internet sites.

Department of Health and Social Services
www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca

Canadian Health Network
www.Canadian-Health-Network.ca • Children • Immunization

Canadian Immunization Awareness Program
www.Immunize.cpha.ca • resources • meningitis

Canadian Pediatric Society
www.caringforkids.cps.ca

Meningitis Research Foundation of Canada
www.Meningitis.ca

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/nip/ • Parents Guide to Childhood Immunization

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/NIP/publications/VIS

