



Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

FACT SHEET

MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE

What is meningococcal disease?

Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) is caused by the bacteria, *Neisseria meningitidis*. Many people (10 percent of the population) carry the bacteria at the back of their throat or nose without feeling sick. In some instances, the bacteria overcome the body's natural defenses and cause serious diseases, including meningitis (a swelling of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and septicemia (widespread infection involving blood and multiple organs).

What are the signs and symptoms?

The symptoms of IMD can vary widely, but include sudden onset of high fever, severe headache, vomiting, stiff neck, and a red/purple, pinpoint rash. Sensitivity to light, sleepiness, confusion, and in severe cases, coma may also occur. Some people die from IMD and survivors may suffer some form of permanent disability, such as hearing loss, neurological damage or limb loss.

How can I get meningococcal disease?

The meningococcal bacteria are spread by direct contact with respiratory and oral secretions (saliva and nasal mucus).

How does the vaccine work?

Meningococcal Conjugate ACYW-135 vaccine protects against IMD types A, C, Y and W-135. It will not protect against other types of invasive meningococcal disease, or other organisms that might cause meningitis or septicemia.

Routine childhood and school-based meningococcal programs

All students in grade 7 must receive a single dose of Meningococcal Conjugate ACYW-135 vaccine. Since the 2014/15 school year, grade 7 students need to have proof of vaccination with Meningococcal Conjugate



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ACYW-135 school in Ontario. For grade 7 students who have not been previously immunized with Men-C-ACYW-135 vaccine, one dose is required as part of the routine meningococcal immunization program. For students who have previously been immunized with Men-C-ACYW-135 vaccine, please contact your health care provider or Renfrew County and District Health Unit.

Who is eligible to receive the publicly funded vaccine?

For catch-up, all students born on January 1, 1997 or later who have not yet received the vaccine remain eligible for a single dose of Meningococcal Conjugate ACYW-135 vaccine. In addition, people between the ages of 9 months and 55 years, who have medical conditions that put them at increased risk for invasive meningococcal disease, are eligible for this vaccine.

Are there side effects from the vaccine?

Most individuals will have no side effects from the Men-C-ACYW-135 vaccine; however, of those that do occur, they tend to be mild and may include soreness, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Other side effects such as headache, irritability and fatigue may occur. Severe reactions are rare.

When should I see a doctor/nurse practitioner?

Call your doctor/nurse practitioner or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if any of the following symptoms develop within 3 days of getting the vaccine:

- hives
- swelling of the mouth or throat
- trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- high fever (over 40°C or 104°F)
- convulsions or seizures
- other serious reaction to the vaccine.

Who should NOT get the vaccine?

The following people should not receive Meningococcal Conjugate ACYW-135 vaccine:

- anyone with allergies to the vaccine or any of its components (diphtheria toxoid)
- anyone who previously had a neurological disease called Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)
- anyone with a high fever or serious infection. Vaccination should be delayed until the person is better.

You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your doctor/nurse practitioner or Renfrew County and District Health Unit.

Who should I talk to if I have any questions?

For more information please contact your doctor/nurse practitioner or Renfrew County and District Health Unit Health Info Line at 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 ext. 666.

How do I keep track of this vaccination?

After receiving any vaccination, make sure your personal immunization record is updated. Keep it in a safe place.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit

7 International Drive
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613-735-8666 or
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Adapted from Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Meningococcal (November 2015), Public Health Division- Meningococcal ACYW-135 Information for students, parents and high risk individuals (December 2014) and Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario – December 2016.

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