



Meningococcal C-Conjugate Vaccine

Meningococcal Type C conjugate vaccine protects against Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*, serogroup C. The vaccine will not prevent all types of meningitis infections, but does protect against one of the more common and deadly strains found in Canada. One valid dose of meningococcal C conjugate vaccine given on or after the first birthday is required for students to attend school in Ontario.

What is meningococcal disease (IMD)?

Meningococcal disease is caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria. Many people (10% of the population) carry the bacteria at the back of their throat or nose without feeling sick. In rare 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). The symptoms of IDM 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 IDM and survivors may suffer some form of permanent disability, such as hearing loss, neurological damage or limb loss. The meningococcal bacteria are spread by direct contact with respiratory and oral secretions (saliva and nasal mucus).

How well does the vaccine work?

This vaccine only provides protection against IDM caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* serogroup C bacteria. It will not protect against other serogroups of invasive meningococcal disease, or other organisms that cause meningitis or septicaemia.

Who is eligible to receive the publicly funded vaccine?

Children aged one year old are to receive a single dose of meningococcal C conjugate vaccine, whether they were immunized as an infant or not. Unimmunized persons remain eligible for a single dose of this vaccine if they were:

- 1 year of age on or after September 2004; or
- born between 1986 and 1996

In addition, meningococcal C conjugate vaccine is particularly important for children between 1 and 10 years of age who have medical conditions that put them at increased risk for invasive meningococcal disease. These medical conditions are:

- functional or anatomic asplenia
- complement, properdin, factor D deficiency or primary antibody deficiencies
- cochlear implants (pre/post implant).

Are there side effects from the vaccine?

Most reactions tend to be mild and include soreness, redness, itching and/or rash where the needle was given. Other common side effects are headache and fever. Severe reactions are rare. Please report any side effects or severe vaccine reactions to your doctor/nurse practitioner or local public health unit. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen may be taken following immunization to reduce discomfort or fever. Always follow package directions. Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA or Aspirin®) must not be given to children under 18 years of age.

Who should not get the vaccine?

People should not receive the vaccine if:

- they have allergies to the vaccine or any component in the vaccine (tetanus toxoid, diphtheria toxoid, aluminum, mannitol).
- they had an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine.
- they have an infection and high fever. Vaccination should be delayed until feeling better.
- have been vaccinated within the last 6 months with another Meningococcal Vaccine.
- are on high dose of corticosteroids or immunosuppressive agents, or who have immunosuppressive illness.
- have previously had a neurological condition called Guillain-Barré syndrome.

You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your doctor/nurse practitioner or local public health unit.

When should I call my doctor/ nurse practitioner?

You should call your doctor/nurse practitioner or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if your child develops any of the following symptoms within three days of getting the needle:

- hives
- swelling of the mouth and 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 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 my child's immunizations?

After your child receives any immunization, make sure his/her personal immunization record (Yellow Card) is updated. Keep it in a safe place!

Renfrew County and District Health Unit

7 International Drive
Pembroke, Ontario K8A 6W5
613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097, Ext. 666.

Adapted from Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Meningococcal Fact Sheet for Parents and Students (Nov. 2015) and Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario (March 2015).

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