



Meningococcal Fact Sheet for Parents and Students

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal Conjugate ACYW-135 vaccine protects against Invasive Meningococcal Disease (IMD) caused by the bacteria, neisseria meningitidis, serogroups A, C, Y and W-135. 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 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. 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 IMD caused by neisseria meningitidis serogroups A, C, Y and W-135. It will not protect against other serogroups of invasive meningococcal disease, or other organisms that might cause meningitis or septicemia.

Who is eligible to receive the publicly funded vaccine?

All students in grade 7 need to receive a single dose of Meningococcal Conjugate ACYW-135 vaccine. For catch-up, all students born January 1, 1997 or later and 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. These medical conditions are:

- functional or anatomic asplenia
- complement, properdin, factor D deficiency or primary antibody deficiencies
- cochlear implants (pre/post implant).
- Individuals with acquired complement deficiencies (e.g. receiving eculizumab)
- Individuals with HIV

Are there side effects from the vaccine?

Common side effects include pain, redness and swelling where the vaccine was given. Other side effects such as headache, irritability and malaise may occur. 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?

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 Barre' Syndrome (GBS).
- anyone with a high fever or serious infection. Vaccination should be delayed until the person is better.

What do I do if I choose not to vaccinate my child?

- Contact Renfrew County and District Health Unit at 613-735-8651 x 597

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 you or your child develops any of the following symptoms within three 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 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 immunization?

After receiving any immunization, make sure the 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 (June 2012) and Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario – August 2011.

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