

# Meningococcal Disease

## What is meningococcal disease?

- Meningococcal disease is any illness caused by the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*.
- It is the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children 2-18 years of age in U.S.
- Meningococcal disease can be very serious, even life-threatening in 48 hours or less.
- The two most severe and common illnesses caused by meningococcal bacteria include;
  - Meningitis - an infection of the fluid and lining around the brain and spinal cord
  - Septicemia - a bloodstream infection

## What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms of meningococcal disease are similar to influenza (flu) and may include:
  - Sudden onset of a high fever
  - Headache
  - Stiff neck
  - Nausea
  - Vomiting
  - Increased sensitivity to light
  - Rash
  - Confusion
  - Severe aches and pain in the muscles, joints, chest or belly

## How does meningococcal disease spread?

- Meningococcal disease is spread person to person by sharing respiratory secretions, through kissing or coughing, close or lengthy contact, and among people who share a room or live in the same household.
- Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but teens and college freshmen who live in residence halls are at increased risk.
- Some people can “carry” meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat without getting meningococcal disease, but can still infect other people.
- Most cases of meningococcal disease are spread by people who “carry” the bacteria with no symptoms, appear to be random, and not linked to other cases.
- Meningococcal outbreaks can occur in communities, schools, colleges, prisons, and in other high-risk populations.

## Who should get meningococcal vaccine?

- Meningococcal vaccine(s) is recommended for all preteens and teens.



Alabama Department of Public Health

Immunization Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104

1-800-469-4599 [www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization](http://www.alabamapublichealth.gov/immunization) 11/01/2017

- All 11 and 12 year olds should be vaccinated with serogroups A, C, W, and Y meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4). A booster dose is recommended at age 16.
- Teens and young adults, 16 through 23 year olds, may also be vaccinated with a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (SBMV), preferably at 16 through 18 years old.
- Both MCV4 and SBMV can be given at the same time, talk to your provider.
- Teens with HIV should get three doses of MCV4.
- People 55 years of age and older should get Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4).

#### **Who should be vaccinated because they are at increased risk?**

- College freshmen living in dormitories.
- Laboratory personnel exposed to meningococcal bacteria.
- U.S. military recruits.
- Anyone traveling or living where meningococcal disease is common, like Africa.
- Anyone with a damaged spleen or who had the spleen removed.
- Anyone with an immune system disorder.
- Anyone exposed during a meningococcal meningitis outbreak.

#### **What are the vaccine side effects and risks?**

- MCV4 and SBMV is safe, but side effects can occur.
- Most side effects are mild or moderate and do not affect daily activities.
- The most common side effects in preteens and teens occur where the injection is given and may include pain, tenderness, swelling, and hardness of the skin.
- Other common side effects may include nausea, feeling a little run down, and headache.
- Some preteens and teens may also faint after getting a vaccine.
- Reactions usually last a short time and get better within a few days.

#### **Where can I find more information?**

- Ask your doctor.
- Call the Alabama Department of Public Health, Immunization Division, at 1-800-469-4599.
- Go to [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) and type meningococcal disease in SEARCH box.



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