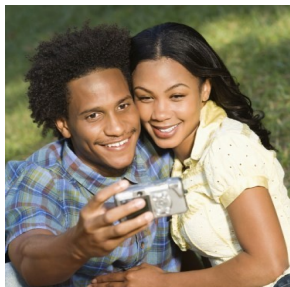## Who should get meningococcal vaccine?

Adolescents are recommended to receive two doses of the meningococcal vaccine that prevents infection with types A, C, W, and Y. The first dose is recommended at 11 or 12 years of age, followed by a booster dose at age 16. The vaccine is also recommended for persons at increased risk for disease.

There are also vaccines to help protect against meningococcal type B. MenB vaccine is recommended for people 10 and older who are at increased risk. It may be given to people 16 through 23 years old (preferably at 16 through 18 years old) in addition to the routinely administered meningococcal conjugate vaccine, to help provide broader protection. Ask your healthcare provider if your child should receive this vaccine.

In New Jersey, meningococcal vaccine (MenACWY) is required for 11-year-olds attending school. Students in higher education may also be required to have received the vaccine. For more information, see N.J.A.C. 8:57-4 and P.L. 2019, c332.

Is the meningococcal vaccine safe?

Meningococcal vaccines are safe and effective. As with all vaccines, there can be minor reactions, including pain and redness at the injection site or a mild fever for one to two days. Severe side effects, such as a serious allergic reaction, are very rare.

Where can I get more information about meningococcal vaccine?

♦ **Your healthcare provider**

♦ **Your local health department**
   www.localhealth.nj.gov

♦ **New Jersey Department of Health**
   Meningococcal Disease Page
   www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/meningo.shtml

♦ **New Jersey Department of Health**
   Immunization Requirements
   www.nj.gov/health/cd/imm_requirements

♦ **Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)**
   www.cdc.gov/meningococcal

**New Jersey Department of Health
Communicable Disease Service Vaccine
Preventable Disease Program
PO Box 369
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-826-4861**

This information is intended for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace consultation with a healthcare professional.

October 2020

Meningococcal Disease

Are you protected?

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease refers to any illness caused by the type of bacteria (germs) called *Neisseria meningitidis*. Meningococcal disease may result in inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and/or a serious blood infection (septicemia).

About 5-20% of people carry this type of bacteria in their nose and throat and do not get sick from them. But sometimes, *Neisseria meningitidis* can invade the body and cause meningococcal disease.

Who gets meningococcal disease?

Anyone can get meningococcal disease, but certain groups are at increased risk. These include:

- College students and military recruits living in dorms or barracks

- People with certain medical conditions or immune system disorders including a damaged or removed spleen

- People who may have been exposed to meningococcal disease during an outbreak

- International travelers

Why should I be concerned about meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is serious; even with treatment, the disease may result in death. Of those who live, about 20% will lose their arms or legs, have problems with their nervous system, become deaf, or suffer seizures or strokes. **Early diagnosis and treatment are very important.**

How do people get meningococcal disease?

The bacteria are spread from person-to-person through the exchange of saliva (spit) or nasal secretions. One must be in direct (close) contact with an infected person's secretions in order to be exposed.

Close contact includes activities such as:
- Living in the same household
- Kissing
- Sharing eating utensils, food, drinks, cigarettes

These bacteria are not as contagious as the germs that cause the common cold or flu. The bacteria are not spread by casual contact or by breathing the air where a person with meningococcal disease has been.

What are the symptoms of meningococcal disease?

Common symptoms are:

- **Confusion**
- **Fatigue (feeling very tired)**
- **Headache**
- **High fever**
- **Nausea**
- **Rash of dark purple spots**
- **Sensitivity to light**
- **Stiff neck**
- **Vomiting**

How can meningococcal disease be prevented?

The best way to prevent meningococcal disease is to get vaccinated. There are two types of meningococcal vaccines available in the United States. The first type is the **meningococcal conjugate vaccine** which protects against serogroups A, C, W, and Y.

A second type of meningococcal vaccine is the **serogroup B vaccine**, which helps to protect against serogroup B meningococcal disease.