

Meningococcal ACWY information

Meningococcal ACWY

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria. Although meningococcal disease is uncommon, it can become very serious, very quickly. About 10 per cent of people carry meningococcal bacteria in their throat without becoming unwell. These people are known as 'carriers'. Meningococcal bacteria are passed from person to person by regular, close, prolonged household and intimate contact. Adolescents are at increased risk of meningococcal disease and more likely to spread the disease to others.

Invasive meningococcal disease occurs when these bacteria enter the blood stream to cause septicaemia (infection in the blood, also known as 'bacteraemia') or meningitis, (inflammation of the membrane covering of the brain). Death can occur in up to 10 per cent of cases. Occasionally, severe infection can also occur in the joints, throat, lungs or intestines.

There are different strains (serogroups) of meningococcal bacteria known by letters of the alphabet, including meningococcal A, B, C, W and Y. In recent years some of these meningococcal strains have increased across Australia. Meningococcal B vaccination is available on prescription and this can be discussed with your doctor.

Meningococcal ACWY vaccine

The Meningococcal ACWY vaccine is a four-in-one combined vaccine for protection against meningococcal A, C, W, Y strains. Studies have shown that this vaccine can provide up to 97 per cent immunity in adolescents. Meningococcal ACWY vaccination programs have been implemented in adolescents in the UK since 2015, and recommended in the US since 2005.

The vaccine does not contain any live bacteria and cannot cause meningococcal disease. The meningococcal ACWY vaccine will boost adolescents with the C strain they had as a baby and protect against the A, W and Y strains.

Possible side effects of meningococcal ACWY vaccine

Most side effects are minor and quickly disappear. If the following reactions occur, it will be soon after vaccination.

Common side effects

- Mild temperature
- Headache
- Dizziness

- Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
- Fainting may occur up to 30 minutes after any vaccination.

If mild reactions do occur, the side effects can be reduced by:

- Drinking extra fluids and not over-dressing if the person has a fever
- Taking paracetamol and placing a cold, wet cloth on the sore injection site.

Extremely rare side effects

- Severe allergic reaction.

In the event of a severe allergic reaction, immediate medical attention will be provided. If reactions are severe or persistent, or if you are worried, contact your doctor or hospital.

Pre-immunisation checklist

Before you or your child is immunised, tell your doctor or nurse if any of the following apply.

- Is unwell on the day of immunisation (temperature over 38.5°C)
- Has any severe allergies
- Has had a severe reaction to any vaccine
- Is pregnant.

After vaccination wait at the place of vaccination a minimum of 15 minutes.

Further information

If you require further advice or information, please contact your local council immunisation service or local doctor.

Or visit the [Better Health Channel website](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/) <<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>>

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