

# Meningococcal Disease - What You Need to Know

## What is meningococcal disease?

- Meningococcal disease, also called meningococcal meningitis, is caused by bacteria.
- It is one of the leading causes of meningitis, or inflammation of the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord.
- Meningococcal disease can cause severe blood infection, or sepsis.
- It is caused mainly by the A, B, C, W, and Y types of meningococcal bacteria.

## How is meningococcal disease spread?

Meningococcal disease is spread through saliva or spit. An infected person can spread it by coughing, sneezing, sharing drinks, or kissing. Being in close proximity to others is a risk factor so college students who live in dorms or other close quarters are at increased risk.

## Meningococcal disease can be prevented with vaccination.

Meningococcal vaccines are the best way to protect against meningococcal disease.

### There are 3 types of meningococcal vaccines:

#### MenACWY Vaccine

The MenACWY vaccine is a 2-dose series and protects against the A, C, W, and Y strains of bacteria that cause meningitis. It is recommended for:

- Adolescents at age 11 or 12 years with a booster dose at 16 to 18 years
- Certain high-risk children from ages 2 months to 10 years
- Adults with certain risk factors and medical conditions including college students living in dormitories and adults with HIV

#### MenB Vaccine

The MenB vaccine is recommended at age 16 to 18 years and requires 2 doses. It protects against the B strain of bacteria that causes meningitis.

#### MenABCWY Vaccine

There is also a newer vaccine available that protects against meningitis bacteria types A, B, C, W, and Y. Recommendations for this vaccine are based on age and previous meningitis immunization history.



**Flip over to read about meningococcal disease risks and the importance of vaccination.**



## Why is it important to get meningococcal vaccines?

Anyone can get meningococcal disease. Babies under age 1 are at higher risk of contracting the illness. Adolescents and young adults between ages 16 and 21 and adults over age 65 are also at higher risk.

Meningococcal disease is life-threatening if not caught early.

## What are symptoms and risks of meningococcal disease?

Fever, headache, and neck stiffness are the most common symptoms. At first these symptoms might be mistaken for the flu (which is also a serious disease). Meningococcal disease symptoms can also include nausea and vomiting, sensitivity to light, and altered mental state or confusion. Another common symptom is a dark purple rash which is an indication that the disease has gotten worse and is infecting the blood stream. This is called meningococcal septicemia.

Complications from meningococcal disease can include brain damage, hearing loss, learning disabilities, and limb loss.

**Remember, the disease moves quickly, so it is important to seek medical attention if you develop symptoms of meningococcal disease!**

**Have questions about meningococcal vaccines?  
Talk with your healthcare provider, pharmacist, or  
community health center.**

**Find free and low-cost vaccine providers near you:  
<https://cdphe.colorado.gov/find-free-low-cost-vaccine-provider>**

**#KeepCOHealthy**

### Sources

- <https://meningitisprevention.org/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/symptoms/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/meningococcal/vaccines/index.html>

[www.ImmunizeColorado.org](http://www.ImmunizeColorado.org) | [www.ImmunizeforGood.com](http://www.ImmunizeforGood.com)

