

**left school?
aged 16-18?**

**get the
MenACWY vaccine**



MenACWY

what's it all about?

Meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning) are rare but life-threatening diseases. They are caused by several groups of meningococcal bacteria – the most common types are A, B, C, W and Y. Young people have the highest risk of getting meningococcal disease, as well as children and babies.

Since 2009, there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of cases of meningococcal W (MenW) infection in the UK. You are more at risk of getting meningitis and septicaemia from MenW as a teenager or young adult, so we are running a one-year, catch-up programme offering a MenACWY vaccine to:

- **anyone aged 16–18 that has left school – who can get the vaccine at their GP practice from August 2015**
- **students returning to school in August 2015 – young people who will be in S3–S6 will get their vaccine at school from January 2016 (or at their GP practice in the Western Isles).**

This leaflet explains why it's important that young people who have left school get the MenACWY vaccine at their GP practice to help protect them against meningitis and septicaemia.

What is meningitis?

Meningitis is inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord. This causes pressure on the brain resulting in symptoms such as severe headache, stiff neck, dislike of bright light, drowsiness and convulsions/fits.

Meningitis can progress very rapidly and can lead to deafness, blindness, epilepsy and learning difficulties. It can even lead to death.

What is septicaemia?

Septicemia (blood poisoning) is a serious, life-threatening infection that gets worse very quickly and the risk of death is higher compared with meningitis.

What causes meningitis and septicaemia?

Meningococcal bacteria are significant causes of meningitis and septicaemia. There are five main groups of meningococcal bacteria that can cause meningitis and septicaemia – A, B, C, W and Y. Meningococcal bacteria live in the throats of about 25% of young people without causing any problems at all. The bacteria can spread to other people through coughing, sneezing or kissing. The MenACWY programme is targeting young people because of the higher risk of the bacteria spreading among young people your age.

A full description of the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia can be found at

www.immunisationscotland.org.uk/meningitis or contact one of the organisations listed on page 7.

How do meningococcal bacteria cause serious illness?

Sometimes the bacteria in the throat get into the bloodstream, causing septicaemia, or they can get into the fluid around the brain, causing meningitis.

Meningococcal bacteria can cause:

- septicaemia only, or
- meningitis only, or
- both septicaemia and meningitis at the same time.

What are the main symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia?

Meningitis and septicaemia are very serious diseases that need urgent medical treatment. If you think you've got either, get help immediately and make sure your friends know to look out for you and each other.

The main symptoms may include:

- **fever, cold hands and feet**
- **vomiting**
- **drowsiness, finding it difficult to wake up**
- **irritability and/or confusion**
- **dislike of bright lights**
- **severe headache or muscle pains**
- **pale, blotchy skin (with or without a rash)**
- **stiff neck**
- **convulsions/seizures.**

Do the 'glass test'

Someone with septicaemia may develop a rash which will not fade under pressure. You can check by pressing a clear glass against the rash – if the spots don't fade and lose colour, get medical help immediately. Call 999 or get someone to take you to the nearest hospital emergency department.



If someone has other symptoms but not a rash, don't wait for a rash to appear before you get help. It can be a late sign or may not appear at all. If someone is ill and getting worse, get medical help immediately.

How common is meningococcal disease?

Thanks to a very successful MenC immunisation programme, meningococcal group C disease is now rare. However, since 2009, there has been a large increase in MenW disease across the country, including several deaths among young people. For people who get meningococcal disease, the effects for the individual and their family are devastating.

Why do I need to get the vaccine?

You have a higher risk of getting meningococcal disease because of your age. You need to get immunised to protect yourself as well as to protect others around you.

You may recently have had a MenC vaccine to protect you against meningococcal C infection but **this will not protect you against MenW**. Having the MenACWY vaccine after getting the MenC vaccine will not only give you better protection against MenC infection, but will also protect you against the other three meningococcal groups (A, W and Y).

When will I get the vaccine?

If you've left school, you should make an appointment with your GP to get the MenACWY vaccine now.

If you are planning to go to university, it is important that you make an appointment with your GP to get the MenACWY vaccine – ideally 2 weeks before you go.

You can still go to a GP at university and arrange to get the vaccine there. But try and do that straight away – make an appointment in freshers' week – don't leave it till later.

If you're going back to school in August 2015, you will get the vaccine at school (or at your GP practice in the Western Isles).

Do I have to have the vaccine?

It's your choice, but it's recommended that all young people aged 14–18 years get the vaccine to protect themselves from very serious illnesses, as well as to help protect others.

Is the vaccine safe?

Before they are allowed to be used, all medicines (including vaccines) are tested for safety and effectiveness. Once they are in use, the safety of vaccines continues to be monitored.

Does the immunisation hurt? What are the common side effects?

Like all vaccines, the MenACWY vaccine can cause side effects, but they are generally mild and soon settle. Getting the vaccine is like a short sting. The most common side effects for young people are redness, hardening and itching at the injection site, headache, nausea and fatigue.

If you feel unwell at any time after getting immunised, you should contact your GP.

What to do next?

You and your parents, or carer, should discuss the information in this leaflet before agreeing to have the immunisation.

Parental agreement is always advised, although it is not always necessary. If you or your parents have any questions about having the immunisation, you can talk to your practice nurse or your GP if you feel you need more information about any aspect of the immunisation programme.

Make an appointment with your GP to get the vaccine.

Where can I get more information?

There is more information about the MenACWY vaccine at **www.immunisationscotland.org.uk/menacwy**

You can call the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (text phone **18001 0800 22 44 88**). The helpline is open every day 8 am to 10 pm and provides an interpreting service.

The following charities provide information, advice and support about meningitis:

Meningitis Research Foundation

Free helpline **080 8800 3344**

www.meningitis.org

Meningitis Now

Free helpline **0808 80 10 388**

www.meningitisnow.org

This resource is available in Urdu, Chinese and Polish, and in an Easy Read format. NHS Health Scotland is happy to consider requests for other languages and formats. Please contact **0131 314 5300** or email **nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net**

When to immunise	Diseases protected against	Vaccine given
2 months old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DTaP/IPV/Hib
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pneumococcal disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCV
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotavirus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotavirus vaccine
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meningococcal type B (MenB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MenB
3 months old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DTaP/IPV/Hib
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meningococcal type C (MenC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MenC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotavirus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rotavirus vaccine
4 months old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio and Hib 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DTaP/IPV/Hib
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pneumococcal disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCV
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meningococcal type B (MenB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MenB
Between 12 and 13 months old – within a month of the first birthday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hib and meningococcal type C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hib/MenC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pneumococcal disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCV
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meningococcal type B (MenB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MenB
2 to 11 years – annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influenza (flu) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> flu vaccine
3 years 4 months old or soon after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dTaP/IPV or DTaP/IPV
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measles, mumps and rubella 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMR (check first dose has been given)
Girls aged 11 to 13 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cervical cancer caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) types 16 and 18 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HPV vaccine
Around 14 years old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tetanus, diphtheria and polio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Td/IPV, and check MMR status
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meningococcal types ACWY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MenACWY