

Meningococcal Vaccine

Vaccine Information Leaflet

What the Meningococcal Vaccine Used for?

Meningococcal vaccines help protect against meningococcal disease caused by four strains (A, C, Y, W-135) of the bacteria *Neisseria meningitidis*. Meningococcal disease can present as an infection of the brain and spinal cord lining (meningitis), infection of the blood (septicaemia) or lung infection (pneumonia).

Symptoms of meningococcal disease may include a sudden onset of headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, light sensitivity, neck stiffness, a rash of red-purple spots or bruises. Young children may present with less specific symptoms such as irritability, crying, difficulty in waking or refusal to eat.

Meningococcal disease is spread through direct person-to-person contact (e.g. through saliva during kissing) or when in close and prolonged contact with an infected person through the air (e.g. coughing or sneezing). A person who is well but a carrier of the bacteria in their body, may also spread the disease.

While the risk of meningococcal disease is rare in most countries, it is a severe disease with a significant risk of death or lasting disabilities in people who get it.

Who Should Receive the Meningococcal Vaccine?

The meningococcal vaccine is recommended for the prevention of meningococcal disease among high-risk groups such as:

- Persons travelling to Mecca for the Hajj or Umrah (a mandatory requirement by Saudi Arabia's government)
- Persons travelling to the sub-Saharan Africa
- Persons with lower body resistance to infections due to
 - Conditions such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection, spleen removal or abnormal spleen function, sickle cell disease
 - On treatment with medications such as Eculizumab
- Persons who are close contacts of patients with meningococcal disease
- Persons at risk due to an outbreak of meningococcal disease in the community

If you think you are among the high-risk groups, please consult your doctor for advice.

What Precautions Should I Follow Before Receiving the Meningococcal Vaccine?

Inform your healthcare professional if:

- You are allergic to this vaccine or any of the other ingredients of this vaccine
- You are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding
- You are taking any other medications
- You are currently not feeling well and having a fever
- You have a weak immune system due to an illness such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection
- You are currently on medications which weaken your immune system (e.g. high dose steroids)
- You have recently received any other vaccines
- You have a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a rare nerve condition)
- You have a history of bleeding disorders

How Is The Meningococcal Vaccine Given?

It is given by injection into a muscle.

It is given as a series of one, two or four doses, depending on the age when the first dose was given and whether you have a weak immune system. A booster dose may be required. Please consult your doctor for more advice.

It is recommended to give the vaccine at least 10 to 14 days before travel, to give the body enough time to build up immunity for protection against meningococcal disease.

What Are Some Common Side-Effects Of The Meningococcal Vaccine?

- Some people may feel faint after the vaccination
 - Sit for 15 minutes after receiving the vaccine to avoid fainting
- Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
 - You may place a cold compress over the affected area for relief
 - You may take paracetamol for pain relief
- Headache
 - You may take paracetamol for pain relief
- Crying, irritability, sleepiness in children
 - These side effects usually go away on its own

Please see a doctor if these side effects do not get better or become worse.

What Are Some Rare But Serious Side-Effects That I Need To Seek Medical Advice Immediately?

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

If you/your child experience any of these symptoms, you/your child should see your/their healthcare professional immediately.

Disclaimers

Please take note that the above is not a complete list of all possible side effects. If you have any concerns about your medication or if you have other side effects that you think are caused by this medication, please consult your doctor or pharmacist.

The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.

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