



Meningococcal Vaccines for Preteens and Teens

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Why does my child need to be vaccinated?

Meningococcal vaccines help protect against the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. These infections don't happen very often, but can be very dangerous when they do. Meningococcal disease refers to any illness that is caused by *Neisseria meningitidis* bacteria. The two most severe and common illnesses caused by these bacteria include infections of the fluid and lining around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and bloodstream infections (bacteremia or septicemia). Even if they get treatment, about 10 to 15 out of 100 people with meningococcal disease will die from it.

Meningococcal disease can spread from person to person. The bacteria that cause this infection can spread when people have close or lengthy contact with someone's saliva, like through kissing or coughing, especially if they are living in the same place. Teens and young adults are at increased risk for meningococcal disease.

Meningococcal disease can become very serious, very quickly. The meningococcal vaccine is the best way to protect teens from getting meningococcal disease.

When should my child be vaccinated?

All 11 to 12 year olds should be vaccinated with a single dose of a quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine. Older teens need a second shot when they are 16 years old so they stay protected when their risk is the highest.

Teens who got meningococcal vaccine for the first time when were 13, 14, or 15 years old should still get the booster shot when they are 16 years old. If your older teen didn't get the meningococcal shot at all, you should talk to their doctor about getting it as soon as possible.

Teens and young adults (16 through 23 year olds) may also be vaccinated with a serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (2 or 3 doses depending on brand), preferably at 16 through 18 years old. Talk with your teen's doctor or nurse about meningococcal vaccination to help protect your child's health.

What else should I know about the vaccination?

Like many vaccines, meningococcal shots may cause mild side effects, like redness and soreness where the shot was given (usually in the arm). Note that both meningococcal vaccines can be given during the same visit, but in different arms. Some preteens and teens might faint after getting a meningococcal vaccine or any shot. To help avoid fainting, preteens and teens should sit or lie down when they get a shot and then for about 15 minutes after getting the shot.

How can I get help paying for these vaccines?

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program provides vaccines for children ages 18 years and younger, who are uninsured, Medicaid-eligible, American Indian or Alaska Native. You can find out more about the VFC program by going online to www.cdc.gov and typing VFC in the search box.

Where can I learn more?

Talk to your child's doctor or nurse to learn more about meningococcal vaccines and the other vaccines that your child may need. You can also find out more about these vaccines on CDC's Vaccines for Preteens and Teens website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/teens.

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