



Meningococcal Vaccine for Preteens and Teens

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Why does my child need meningococcal vaccine?

The meningococcal conjugate vaccine protects against 4 strains of the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease. These infections don't happen very often, but can be very dangerous when they do. The two most severe and common forms of meningococcal disease are meningitis and septicemia. Meningitis is an infection of the fluid and lining around the brain and spinal cord and can lead to brain damage, hearing loss, learning disabilities, and even death. Septicemia is a bloodstream infection, which can lead to loss of an arm or leg and even death. Even if they get treatment, about 1 in 10 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?

Teens are at increased risk of getting meningococcal disease. Preteens should get the first meningococcal shot when they are 11 or 12 years old, before they become teens and their risk is higher. 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. This is

really important if they are about to move into a college residence hall as a first-year student or go into the military. Living in community settings like those can increase the risk of getting meningococcal disease.

What else should I know about the vaccine?

Meningococcal vaccine has been studied very carefully and is safe and effective. It is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine.

Like many vaccines, the meningococcal shot may cause mild side effects, like redness and soreness where the shot was given (usually in the arm). A few people who get the vaccine will get a fever. Some preteens and teens might faint after getting 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. Serious side effects from meningococcal vaccine are rare.

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 not insured, 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 vaccine 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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