

# MENINGOCOCCAL VACCINE

Meningococcal (Group A, C, Y and W-135) Polysaccharide Diphtheria Toxoid Conjugate Vaccine

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### 1. What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is caused by bacteria that infect the bloodstream, lining of the brain and spinal cord, often causing serious illness. Every year in the United States, 1,400 to 2,800 people get meningococcal disease. Ten to 14 percent of people with meningococcal disease die, and 11-19 percent of survivors have permanent disabilities (such as mental retardation, hearing loss, and loss of limbs).

The disease often begins with symptoms that can be mistaken for common illnesses, such as the flu. However, meningococcal disease is particularly dangerous because it progresses rapidly and can kill within hours.

Knowing the warning signs of meningococcal disease can be potentially lifesaving. Symptoms include: headache, fever, stiff neck, extreme fatigue, vomiting, light sensitivity, and a rash of small purplish red-black dots.

Time is critical when it comes to treating meningococcal disease. Contact your doctor or seek medical attention immediately if you suspect meningococcal disease.

### 2. Who should get meningococcal vaccine and when?

The new meningococcal vaccine was licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on January 14, 2005 for use in people age 11-55 years. It is manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur and is marketed as Menactra.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (ACIP) has a new recommendation which is that 11-12 year olds receive meningococcal vaccine at the routine 11-12 year old visit for a tetanus-diphtheria booster shot.

In order to foster the most rapid reduction of meningococcal disease following this new recommendation, the committee also

recommended that for the next 2-3 years teens entering high school also be vaccinated.

College freshman who live in dormitories are at higher risk of meningococcal disease than other college students and should also be vaccinated. Meningococcal vaccine may also be provided to college students who do not live in residence halls and adolescents who want to reduce their risk for the disease.

Menactra may be administered along with other immunizations, including tetanus-diphtheria (Td).

### 3. How effective is the vaccine?

The vaccine is highly effective. However, it does not protect people against meningococcal disease caused by the "type B" bacteria. This type of bacteria causes one-third of meningococcal cases. More than half of the cases among infants <1 year are caused by the "type B," for which no vaccine is licensed or available in the U.S.

As with any vaccine, vaccination with Menactra may not protect 100% of the individuals who receive it. It is administered as a single 0.5 ml intramuscular injection. The need for, or timing of, a booster dose has not yet been determined.

### 3. Who should not receive the vaccine?

Individuals with known hypersensitivity (severe allergic reaction) to any component of the vaccine or to latex, which is used in the vial stopper, should not receive the vaccine.

Because of the risk of hemorrhage, Menactra should not be given to persons with any bleeding disorder such as hemophilia or thrombocytopenia or to persons on anticoagulant therapy (e.g., Coumadin) unless the potential benefit clearly outweighs the risk of administration.

### 4. Who should delay getting the vaccine?

As with most vaccines, you should delay immunization if you have an illness (such as a fever).

Meningococcal vaccine should be given to pregnant women only if clearly needed. Aventis Pasteur maintains a pregnancy registry for women who have received Menactra: 1-800-822-2463.

Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be taken when Menactra is administered to a nursing woman.

## 5. What are the risks from meningococcal vaccine?

### **Serious Problems**

There are risks associated with all vaccines. Like any medicine, a vaccine is capable of causing serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of meningococcal vaccine causing serious harm or death is extremely small. Getting meningococcal vaccine is safer than getting the disease.

### **Mild Problems**

The most common adverse reactions to Menactra vaccine may include pain, redness, and induration at the site of the injection, headache, fatigue, and malaise. These adverse reactions to Menactra vaccine are generally mild and are similar to those following tetanus and diphtheria (Td) vaccine.

## 6. What if there is a serious reaction?

### **What should I look for?**

Look for any unusual condition, such as a severe allergic reaction, high fever or unusual behavior. If a serious allergic reaction occurred, it would happen within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot.

Signs of a serious allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, weakness, hoarseness or wheezing, a fast heart beat, hives, dizziness, paleness, or swelling of the throat.

### **What should I do?**

- **Call** a doctor or get the person to a doctor right away.
- **Tell** your doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask** your doctor, nurse, or health department to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form, or

- **Report** the reaction yourself through the VAERS web site at [www.vaers.org](http://www.vaers.org) or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

*VAERS does not provide medical advice.*

## 7. How can I learn more?

Talk with your doctor or healthcare professional about meningococcal vaccination. You can also get information from your local community health department or University Health Services.

You may also visit these websites:

[www.cdc.gov/nip](http://www.cdc.gov/nip)

[www.meningococcaldisease.com](http://www.meningococcaldisease.com)

[www.vaccinesafety.edu](http://www.vaccinesafety.edu)

[www.partnersforimmunization.org](http://www.partnersforimmunization.org)

[www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org)

[www.immunizationinfo.org](http://www.immunizationinfo.org)

[www.nfid.org/ncai](http://www.nfid.org/ncai)

[www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

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