

**NORTHERN RIVERS AREA HEALTH SERVICE
PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT**

MENINGOCOCCAL DISEASE FACT SHEET

Immunisation Information

Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is an infection caused by the meningococcus bacterium. Occasionally the infection can cause a serious and potentially fatal condition by infecting the lining around the brain (called meningitis), or by infecting the blood (septicaemia). In Australia, serogroup B and serogroup C of the meningococcus are the main causes of the disease.

Who gets meningococcal disease?

Not all people exposed to the germ develop disease. Many people who are exposed eliminate the germ naturally.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include fever, headache, vomiting, loss of appetite, stiff neck, aching muscles and dislike of bright lights. A red-purple rash can develop and looks like bruises or blood blisters under the skin. Sometimes the illness develops as quickly as 1-2 hours and can be fatal in about 1 in 10 cases

How is the germ spread?

The bacteria are spread by exchanging secretions from the nose and throat, as occurs in mouth kissing, or infants mouthing and sharing toys.

Meningococcal serogroup C Vaccines

Vaccines are available that can give long lasting protection against meningococcal serogroup C disease. There are several brands but they all offer long-term protection against meningococcal serogroup C disease. ***There is no vaccine for meningococcal serogroup B disease***

What are the side effects of the meningococcal vaccine?

They are similar to other vaccines and can include:

- Swelling, redness and soreness at the injection site
- Low grade fever
- Crying, feeling unwell or irritable
- Diarrhoea and vomiting
- In older children and adults a headache that last 1-2 days
- As with any vaccine there is an extremely rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction

Can a person get meningococcal disease from the vaccine?

No. The vaccine protects a person by producing antibodies that will recognise and destroy the bacteria in the future if the person is exposed

How long have these vaccines been in use?

Each of the available Meningococcal C vaccines have been in used in the UK since the end of 1999.

How many doses need to be given?

One dose is required for people older than 12 months of age.

Can children in a household with pregnant women be immunised?

Yes. The vaccine does not contain live microorganisms, so cannot be passed from a vaccinated person to a not vaccinated person. Therefore, there is no risk of a pregnant women contracting meningococcal disease from her child as a result of the vaccine.

Can the vaccine be given to pregnant women?

This vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women.

Is breast feeding a problem when having the vaccine?

Vaccination with the conjugate meningococcal serogroup C vaccine is considered safe for the mother and the child

Who should not receive the vaccine?

- Anyone who has suffered an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of meningococcal vaccine
- The vaccination should be postponed in someone suffering a temperature of greater than 38.5 degrees celsius
- Pregnant women

For more information call (02) 66207500

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