



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives. Protecting People. Saving Money through Prevention.



Meningococcal Vaccine for Preteens and Teens

The Vaccine: MCV4

Vaccinate Graduate

The meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) protects against some of the bacteria that cause meningococcal disease, such as meningitis or sepsis (bloodstream infection). MCV4 is recommended for all preteens at age 11 or 12. A booster shot is recommended for teens at age 16 to continue providing protection when their risk for meningococcal disease is highest. Teens who received MCV4 for the first time at age 13 through 15 years will need a one-time booster dose at 16 through 18 years of age. If a teenager missed getting the vaccine altogether, they should ask the doctor about getting it now, especially if they are about to move into a college dorm or military barracks.

To learn about who should and should not get this vaccine, when they should be vaccinated, and the risks and benefits of this vaccine, consult the two [MCV4 vaccine information statements](#) (</vaccines/pubs/vis/default.htm#mening>).

See also:

- [Answers to common questions about who and when they should be vaccinated with meningococcal vaccine](#) (</vaccines/vpd-vac/mening/who-vaccinate.htm>)
- Video, [Have You Heard? \[VIDEO - 4:42 minutes\]](#) (<http://www.cdc.gov/CDCTV/haveyouheard/>)
- [Preteens and teens need these vaccines](#) [319 KB, 2 pages] (</vaccines/who/teens/downloads/parent-version-schedule-7-18yrs.pdf>)
Chart showing the vaccines needed at 7-10, 11-12, and 13-18 years old

The Disease: Meningococcal Disease

In short, meningococcal meningitis is inflammation of the lining around the brain and spinal cord that is caused by a very serious bacterial infection. This infection can lead to brain damage, hearing loss, learning disabilities, and even death. In addition to death, other types of meningococcal disease can lead to loss of an arm or leg.

Meningococcus bacteria are spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (from coughing or kissing). Although it can be very serious, meningococcal disease can be treated with antibiotics that can prevent severe illness and reduce the spread of infection from person to person. Quick medical attention is extremely important if meningococcal disease is suspected.

Keeping up to date with recommended immunizations is the best defense against

meningococcal disease. Maintaining healthy habits, like getting plenty of rest and not coming into close contact with people who are sick, can also help.


Consult the [meningitis web site \(http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/index.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/index.html) for a full description of the risk factors, causes, transmission, signs and symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, prevention and photos of this disease.

See also:

- [Meningitis on Campus: Don't Wait. Vaccinate](http://www.nmaus.org/press-room/materials/NMA%20Brochure.pdf) [PDF, 2 pages] (<http://www.nmaus.org/press-room/materials/NMA%20Brochure.pdf>)
- [Meningococcal Disease: Help Prevent It](http://www.cdc.gov/features/meningococcal/) (<http://www.cdc.gov/features/meningococcal/>)
Meningococcal disease is a serious, vaccine-preventable infection. The meningococcal conjugate vaccine is recommended for all 11-18 year olds. Kids should get this vaccine at 11-12 years of age and a booster dose at age 16.
- [Questions and Answers about Meningococcal Disease](http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/faq.html) (<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/about/faq.html>)

Related Pages

- [References and Publications](http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/pubs-tools/publications.html#b) (<http://www.cdc.gov/meningitis/pubs-tools/publications.html#b>)

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