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NHS
WALES**

Aged 13-18 years?

Or Under 25 and starting university?

Protect yourself against meningitis and septicaemia



**You need to get the MenACWY vaccine.
This leaflet tells you about the vaccine
and what you need to do.**

This leaflet explains why it's important that all young people aged 13-18 years and all those starting university for the first time under the age of 25 receive MenACWY vaccination to help protect against meningococcal disease.

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a rare but life-threatening disease caused by several groups of meningococcal bacteria, the most common of which are A, B, C, W and Y. Meningococcal bacteria can cause meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and septicaemia (blood poisoning).

Both diseases are very serious, especially if not diagnosed early – they can even be fatal.

The same bacteria that cause these serious diseases are also commonly carried in the back of the nose and throat, especially in young adults, without causing any illness.

How common is it?

Meningococcal disease affects around 700-800 people in England and Wales every year. Since the introduction of MenC vaccination into the UK routine vaccination programme in 1999 Meningococcal group C disease is now rare.

Meningococcal group B (MenB) is now the most common cause of meningococcal disease in children and young adults. From September 2015 MenB vaccine has been introduced to the routine infant vaccination programme to help protect young babies.

Since 2009, there has been a large increase in cases of Meningococcal group W (MenW) disease in England and Wales, resulting in several deaths among infants and teenagers.

Why do I need to get the vaccine?

As someone aged 13 to 18, you are at higher risk of getting meningococcal disease, so you need to get vaccinated to protect yourself. Vaccination also reduces the risk of you carrying the bacteria and so protects other people around you. You need this vaccine even if you have recently received MenC vaccine as MenACWY vaccine will offer protection against meningococcal C disease as well as offering additional protection against W, A and Y disease.

It will still be important to know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia because there are other bacteria that can also cause these illnesses.

What are the signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease?

Look out for any of these symptoms



Fever, cold hands and feet



Vomiting



Drowsy, difficult to wake



Confusion and irritability



Severe muscle pain



Pale, blotchy skin
Spots/rash
[See Glass Test](#)



Severe headache



Stiff neck



Dislike bright lights



Convulsions/
seizures

© meningitis now

Do the glass test

Someone with septicaemia may develop a rash of tiny "pin pricks" which can turn into purple bruising. This rash does not fade under pressure. You can do the glass test by pressing the side of a drinking glass against the rash. If the spots don't fade under



pressure, get medical help immediately. Never wait for a rash. It can be a late sign or may not appear.

Septicaemia can occur with or without meningitis. Not everyone gets all the symptoms and they can appear in any order. If you are a student make sure you and your fellow students know the signs and symptoms and look out for each other.

Meningitis and septicaemia are very serious and require urgent attention, get medical help immediately. If you can't get in touch with your doctor, ring 999 or go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital.

When will I get the vaccination?

The MenACWY vaccine will be offered routinely alongside the Td/IPV (teenage booster vaccine) given at around 13-14 years of age (year 9).

A two year catch up programme will offer MenACWY vaccination to all eligible young people older than Year 9.

- In areas where there are school based vaccination sessions MenACWY vaccination will be offered in school years 9 and 11.

- In those old enough to be in school years 12 and 13 (regardless of whether they are in school, college, working or unemployed) vaccination will be offered through GP surgeries. In areas where there is no school based vaccination programme GPs will also offer vaccination to eligible young people.
- Young people over the age of 18 years but under the age of 25 years should also receive the MenACWY vaccine from their GP surgery before they attend university for the first time, as they are likely to be at increased risk of meningococcal disease.

How will I know when I am due to receive the vaccination?

For pupils in years 9,10 and 11 in areas where the teenage booster vaccinations are offered in school, you will be sent a consent form for completion prior to the school vaccination session.

For those not receiving the vaccine in school, your GP surgery will contact you to offer you an appointment to attend for vaccination.

If you are planning to attend university for the first time and have not received an appointment you are advised to contact your GP surgery as soon as possible. Ideally the vaccine should be given at least two weeks before starting university.

Must I have it?

All vaccinations in the UK are voluntary but it's recommended that all young people in this age group have the vaccination not only to protect themselves from very serious illnesses but also others, including infants who may be particularly susceptible to infection. You, or your parent/guardian if you are under 16, have to give consent for you to have the vaccine.

If you receive a consent form at school make sure you and your parent or guardian read the information, sign it and return the form to school as soon as possible.

What if I want more information?

You and your parent or guardian can speak to the school nurse, GP or practice nurse if you feel you need more information about any aspect of the vaccination programme. You can also call NHS Direct Wales on 0845 4647 or contact the charities listed at end of this leaflet.

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine has been used for many years across the world and has an excellent safety record.

What are the common side effects?

You may feel a short sting as the vaccine is given and you may get soreness and some redness in your arm after the injection but it should quickly disappear. Other side effects may include headache, drowsiness, nausea and loss of appetite.

If you feel unwell at any time after vaccination, you should contact your GP.

Information on reporting suspected side effects can be found online at www.yellowcard.gov.uk or call the Yellow Card hotline on 0808 100 3352 (Monday to Friday 10.00 to 14.00)

What if I miss out on the vaccination before I go university?

New university students are at particularly high risk in the first weeks of term therefore every effort should be made to have the vaccine before you start. If you have not received it you can go to the University Health Centre or register with a GP at university and arrange to get the vaccine

there, but try and do that straight away – ideally in freshers' week – don't delay it, the sooner you have it the better.

How can I find out more?

A patient information leaflet which offers further information on the vaccines, including vaccine contents, is available from www.medicines.org.uk/emc/ by entering the name of the vaccine in the search box.



The vaccines currently used for MenACWY vaccination are Nimenrix[®] and Menveo[®].

The routine immunisation schedule that shows you which immunisations are offered in Wales is available from www.publichealthwales.org/routine-immunisation-schedule-wales.

If you have any questions or want more information, talk to your doctor or nurse, call NHS Direct Wales on 0845 4647 or visit www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/



The following charities also provide information, advice and support on meningitis and meningococcal disease:

Meningitis Now

24 hour helpline

0808 80 10 388

www.meningitisnow.org

Meningitis Research Foundation

Free helpline 080 8800 3344

(9am to 10pm weekdays,

10am to 8pm weekends and holidays)

www.meningitis.org

To order more copies of this leaflet email:

hplibrary@wales.nhs.uk or telephone

08456 064050.

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